



Adopted – September 29, 2026



SAN PABLO AVENUE SPECIFIC PLAN



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Special Thanks

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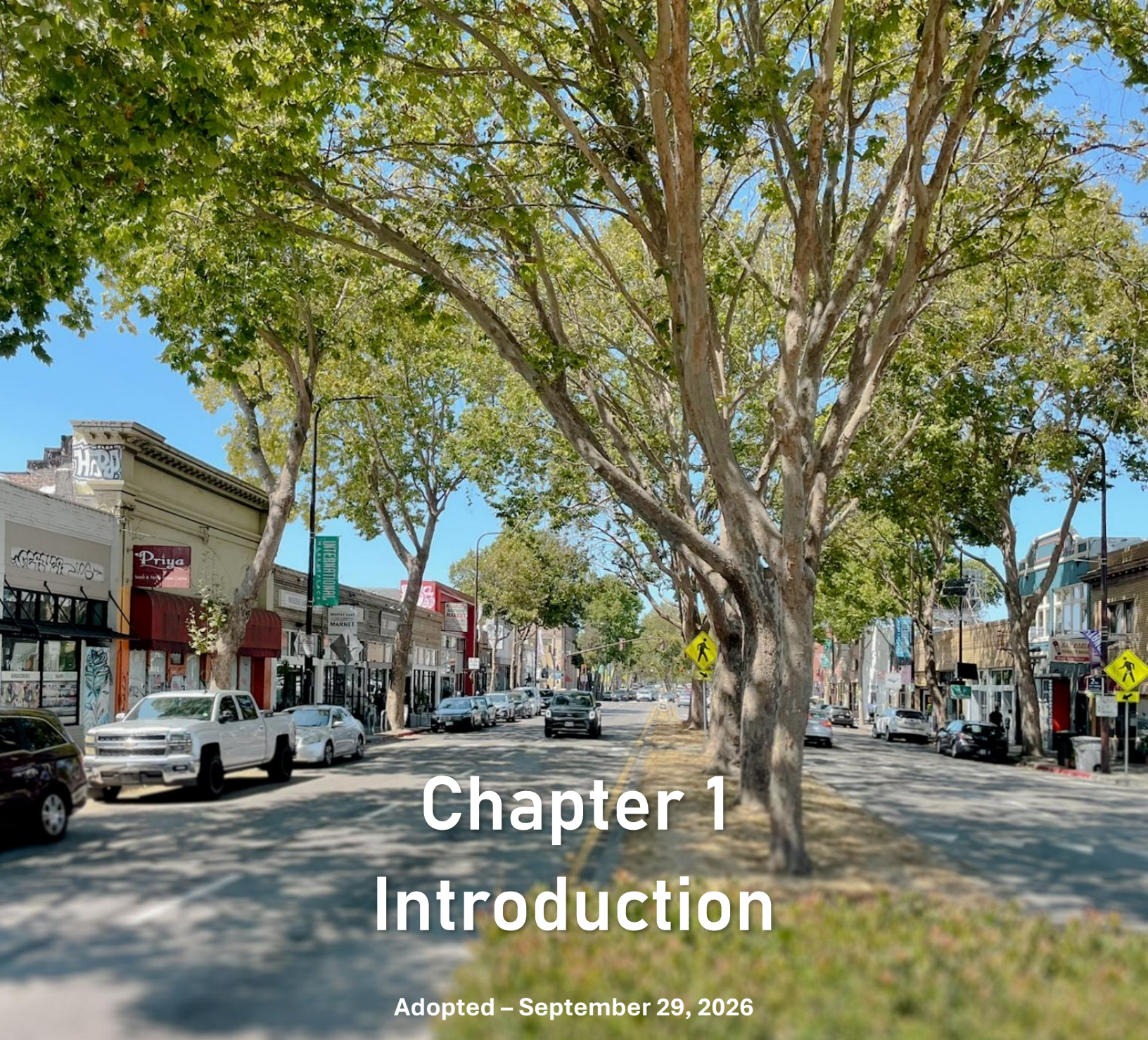
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Chapter 1

Introduction

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San Pablo Avenue is a corridor in transition, shaped by growing demand for housing and fluctuating levels of commercial activity as new businesses open and others close. Existing zoning and State housing laws support additional housing development, but there is no cohesive vision to shape future growth toward a mixed-use district with stronger economic and social vitality.

In 2023, the City of Berkeley launched the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan process to create a framework for equitable and sustainable development, safer streets, better access to the surrounding community, and a more vibrant economy and public realm. Building on City Council direction from 2015, the Specific Plan planning process prioritized inclusive engagement, with targeted outreach to those who live and work in and around the Specific Plan Area and multiple opportunities for the public to participate and shape the Specific Plan.

Specific Plan Purpose

The Specific Plan responds to the question: *“What will the future of San Pablo Avenue look like?”* Its purpose is to establish community-based, context-sensitive regulations and policies that articulate a shared vision for a mixed-use district along San Pablo Avenue. Through the planning process, the City, in collaboration with the consultant team and the community, identified improvements and innovative programs that expand opportunities for living, working, shopping, and community life along San Pablo Avenue.

In February 2021, the City of Berkeley received a Priority Development Area (PDA) Planning Grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) to create the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan.

This Specific Plan establishes a comprehensive framework of land use, public space, transportation, and economic development policies and strategies, including revised standards for allowed uses in existing and new buildings, updated development standards, and design standards for new development. It also outlines programs and policies to support diverse housing options, strengthen new and existing businesses, enhance public amenities, and improve connections between the Specific Plan Area and surrounding neighborhoods and destinations.

Mutual knowledge exchange

The Specific Plan planning process facilitated meaningful knowledge exchange between the community and the Specific Plan team:

- ❑ Stakeholders gained an understanding of how recent changes in citywide policies and State housing legislation have affected the housing development approvals process. The Specific Plan’s public engagement focused on where the community’s input can be meaningful in the context of streamlined project approvals.
- ❑ Stakeholders identified current community assets and expressed their vision for enhancing them, as well as their aspirations for other positive changes along San Pablo Avenue.
- ❑ Stakeholder input provided insight into the unique aspects of the community and their ideas for the future. This informed Specific Plan policies and standards, the land use map, implementation, strategies, and many other aspects of the Specific Plan.

Desired outcomes of the planning process

The San Pablo Specific Plan:

- ★ Identifies a community vision and provides a plan for achieving the vision.
- ★ Includes a framework for transforming San Pablo Avenue into a multimodal street that functions well for all users, not just as a thoroughfare, but as a mixed-use place that provides a multitude of opportunities for living, working and taking part in community life.
- ★ Explains, updates and creates new local planning policies, development standards and practices, and highlights their interrelationship, relevancy, and adherence with State, regional, and citywide planning policies and processes.
- ★ Includes implementation strategies with clear actions and responsibilities.
- ★ Prioritizes equity, promotes inclusivity, and strives to eliminate disparities through the Specific Plan’s policies, programs, and implementation strategies.

Specific Plan Area

Location

San Pablo Avenue is one of the primary multi-jurisdictional transportation corridors in northern Alameda County and west Contra Costa County, extending as a major street from the Carquinez Bridge to Downtown Oakland, through the cities of Hercules, Pinole, San Pablo, Richmond, El Cerrito, Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville and Oakland. The Specific Plan Boundary (Specific Plan Area) encompasses the 2.35-mile corridor along San Pablo Avenue, from the Berkeley/Albany border in the north to the Berkeley/Oakland border in the south.

Study Area

The Study Area includes the neighborhoods, commercial districts, and employment areas that are proximate to and have a strong relationship with the uses along San Pablo Avenue. The Study Area extends from the I-80 freeway in the west to Sacramento Street in the east and from the Albany border in the north to Emeryville and Oakland borders in the south (see Figure 1.2). The Study Area has been studied in select analyses throughout the Specific Plan process to gain an understanding of the



Figure 1.1 San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley and adjacent cities
Data from CD+A, Google Earth. 2025

social and economic relationships between San Pablo Avenue and West Berkeley, to identify historic and culturally significant locations in proximity to San Pablo Avenue, and to identify parks, open spaces, and other community assets that can be used by people living and working in the Specific Plan Area.

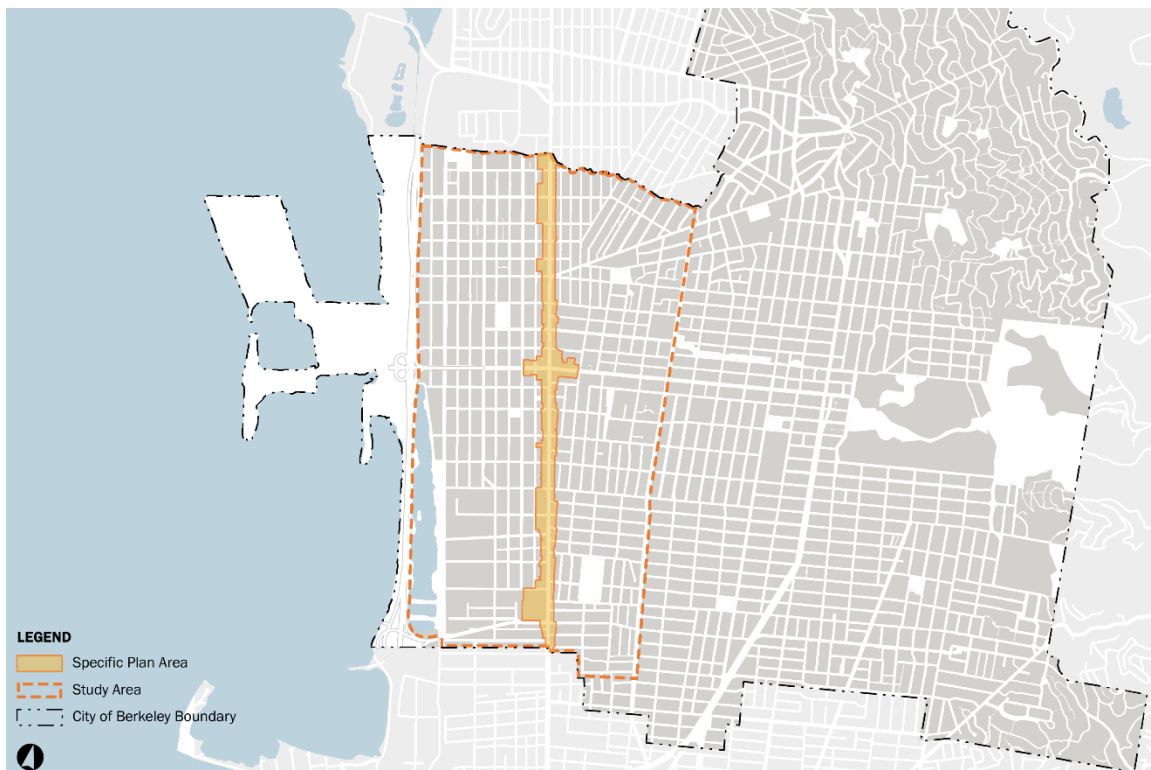


Figure 1.2 Map of Study Area in relation to the City of Berkeley
Data from CD+A, City of Berkeley. 2025

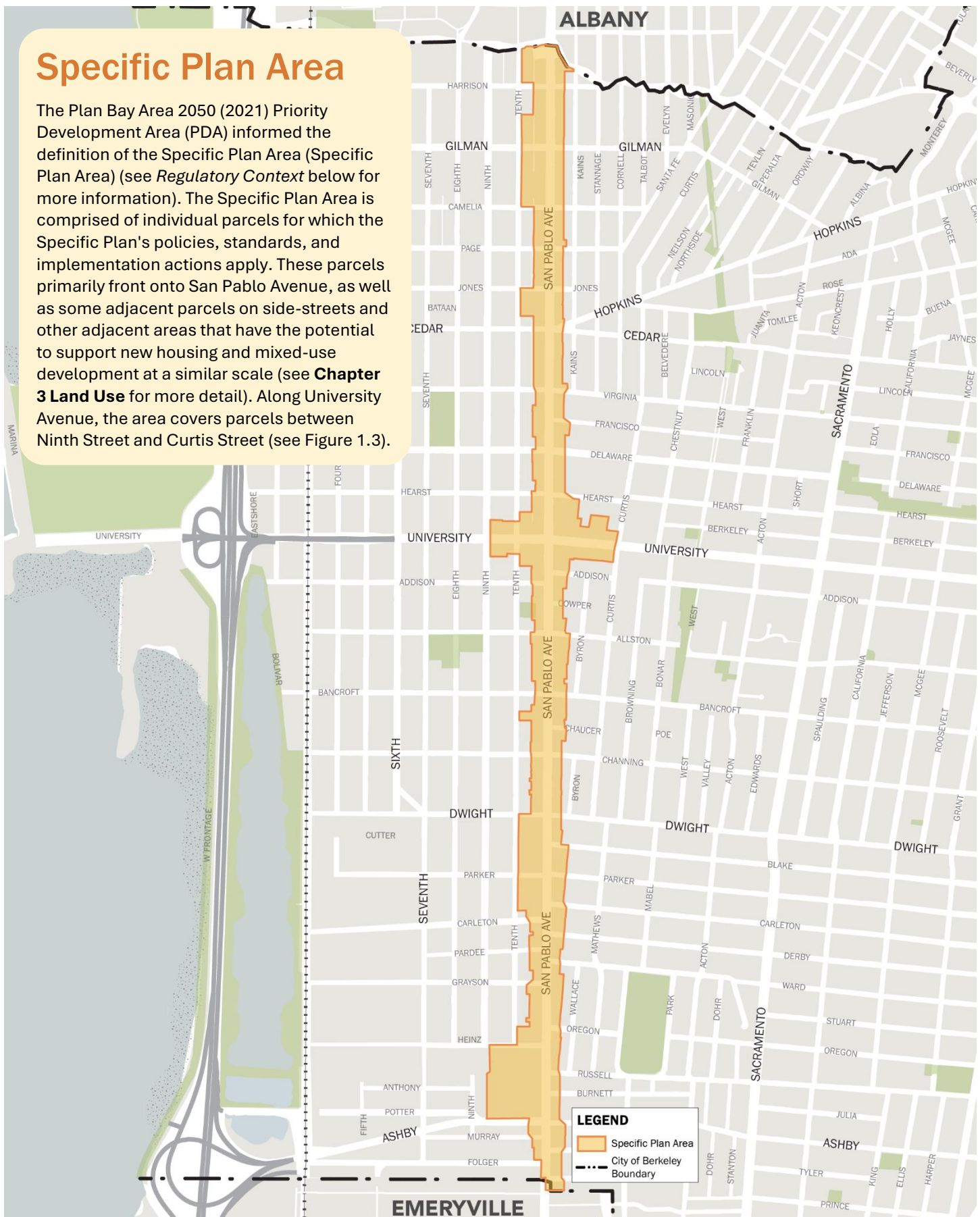


Figure 1.3 Specific Plan Area

Data from CD+A, City of Berkeley. 2025

Significance of the San Pablo Avenue Corridor

Running parallel to I-80, San Pablo Avenue connects tens of thousands of people each day to residential neighborhoods, employment centers, schools, public gathering spaces, shopping, services, and other key destinations in the East Bay. The character and intensity of the streetscape, development, and uses along San Pablo Avenue vary along its length; its connectivity and diversity of uses establish it as a mixed-use corridor in the East Bay. As State Route 123, it also functions as a designated reliever route during incidents on the I-80 freeway. Due to this role, the right-of-way in Berkeley is under the jurisdiction of the State of California through Caltrans, requiring the City of Berkeley to obtain Caltrans approval before making physical changes to the street. For these reasons, San Pablo Avenue has been the subject of multiple regional planning efforts – such as the Association of Bay Area’s (ABAG) East Bay Corridor Initiative and Alameda County Transit Commission’s (Alameda CTC) San Pablo Avenue Corridor Projects. Berkeley has taken part in these efforts and has also followed the development and adoption of Specific Plans in neighboring jurisdictions with great interest.



Figure 1.4 The Key System and Berkeley sign at San Pablo Avenue and University Avenue, ca. 1925.
 Photo from Berkeley Public Library. Calisphere, California Digital Library

Historical Context

Originally known as part of the Lincoln Highway in the early 1900s, San Pablo Avenue served as the primary north-south connection from Oakland, through Berkeley and to and through places to the north prior to the construction of I-80. Its original role as a key regional and national route contributed to its designation as a state highway and shaped the avenue's pattern of region-serving, auto-oriented land uses.

San Pablo Avenue and the Study Area are also part of West Berkeley's history of ethnic and racial segregation. On the 1937 federal Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) redlining maps, much of West Berkeley — particularly the neighborhoods near San Pablo Avenue — were marked in red and deemed “hazardous” for investment, largely because of the presence of African American, Asian American, and immigrant communities (see Figure 1.5).¹ These classifications led to systematic disinvestment, exclusion from mortgage lending, and lasting economic and environmental inequalities. As a result, West Berkeley became both a hub of diverse

working-class communities and a target of discriminatory practices limiting their access to housing elsewhere in the city.

At the same time, the area west of San Pablo Avenue developed as one of Berkeley's primary industrial and manufacturing centers. Industries such as ironworks, chemical production, food processing, and printing thrived, drawing on the surrounding diverse workforce. Although large-scale manufacturing declined after World War II, West Berkeley's industrial legacy remains visible in its historic building stock. Today, a new generation of small-scale manufacturers, makers, and biotechnology firms are located within the Study Area west of San Pablo Avenue, continuing the role of West Berkeley as a center of production and innovation. The Specific Plan Area's proximity to West Berkeley has led to some complementary businesses locating on San Pablo Avenue and supports general business vitality along San Pablo Avenue.

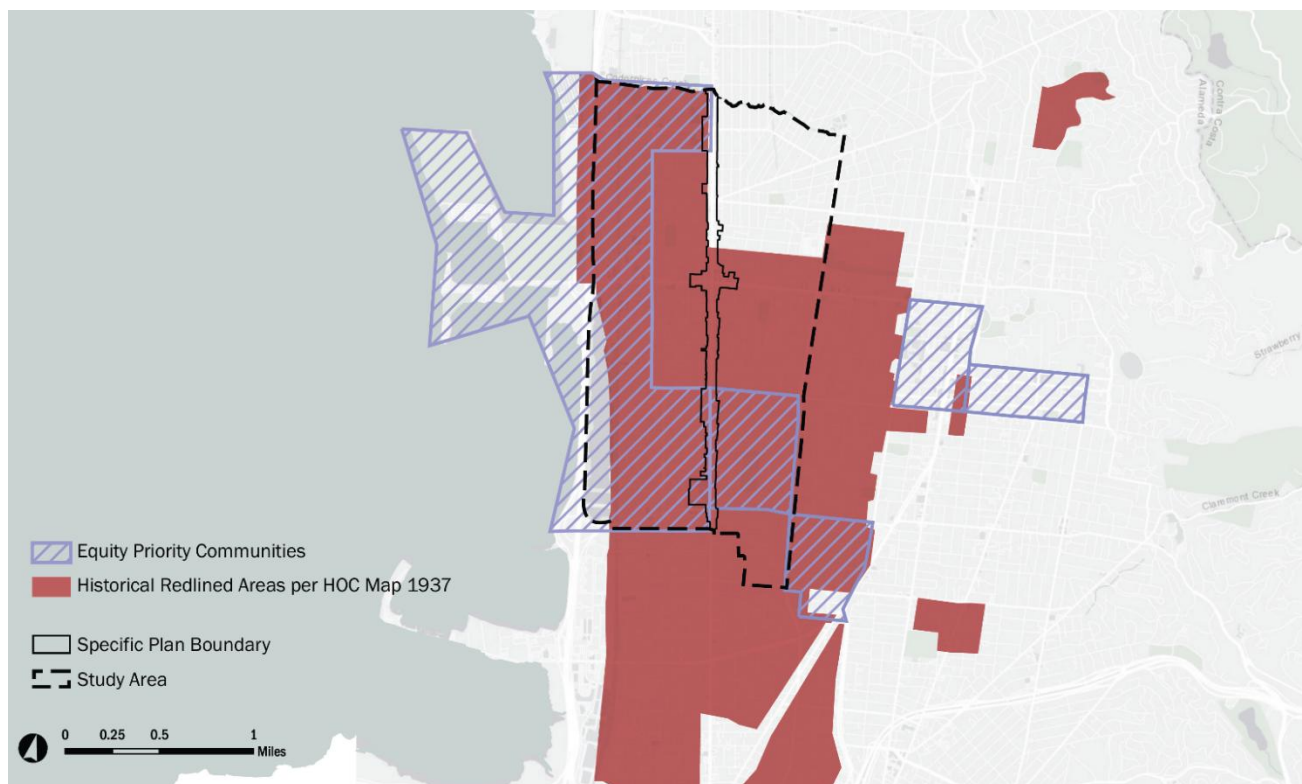


Figure 1.5 Historical Redlined Areas and Equity Priority Communities Map

Data from CD+A; R.K.Nelson and E.L.Ayers, *Mapping Inequality*, 2023; MTC, Equity Priority Communities, 2021

¹ A detailed review on the History of Redlining in the East Bay can be found here:

<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/map/CA/Oakland/context#loc=12/37.8839/-122.2562>. Last accessed 10/02/2025.

Community Demographics

The Study Area has a greater racial and ethnic diversity compared to the city as a whole and Alameda County, with a notably higher Black population. This pattern reflects the legacy of historic redlining that shaped neighborhood demographics and limited mobility for communities of color. Although the Supreme Court ruled racially restrictive covenants unenforceable in *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948), redlining persisted until the Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibited the practice. Its impacts persist today, as formerly redlined areas continue to experience greater economic inequality and higher risk of displacement.

As neighborhoods within the Study Area continue to grow, demographic shifts have varied across racial and ethnic groups. From 2000 to 2020, the White population increased by over 3,900 (+45%), while the Black population decreased by over 2,600 (-39%) (see Figure

1.6). The population increase of Hispanic/Latinx, Asians/API, and other races during that period was moderate.

The Study Area's population in 2020 was 26,360. The population grew 16% between 2010 to 2020, representing 22% of the city's total population and outpacing the city's overall population growth of 9% in the same period.²

As a result of being historically underserved, some census blocks within the Study Area are part of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)'s Equity Priority Communities (EPCs). The EPC designation helps provide funding and assistance to census tracts that have a significant concentration of underserved populations.³

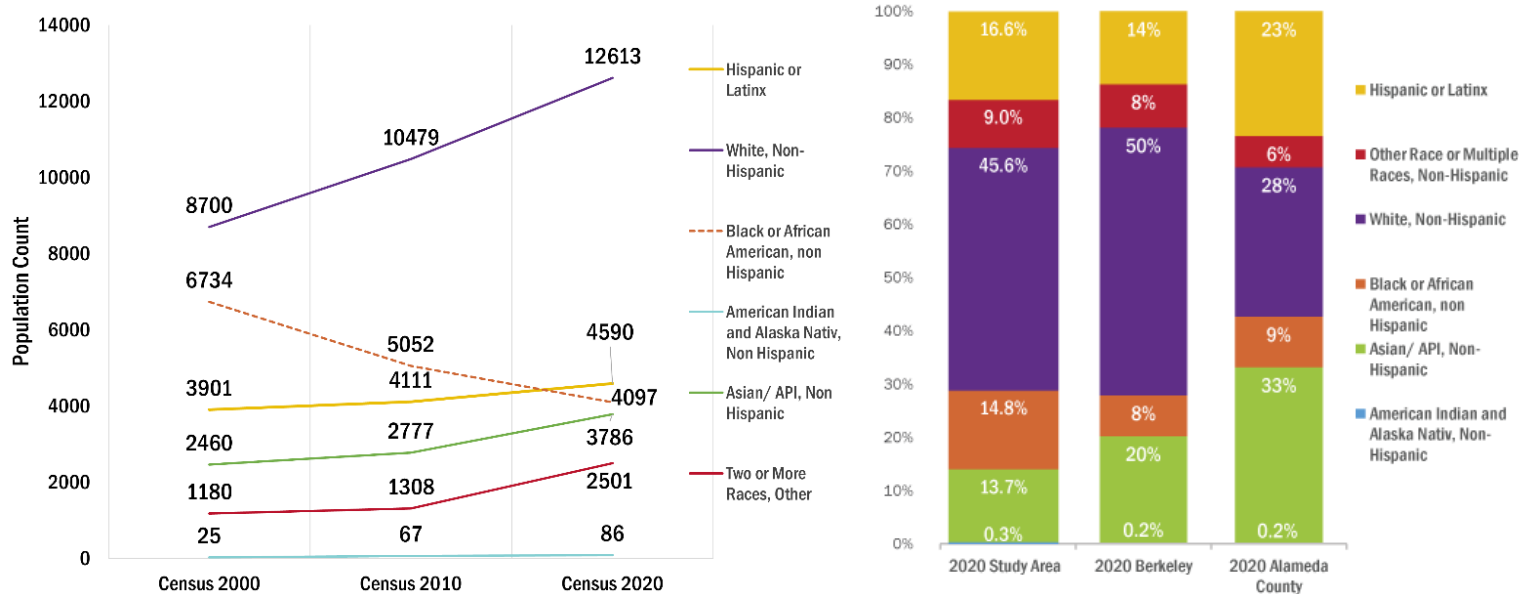


Figure 1.6 Study Area Demographic Change and Comparisons

Left: Change in Study Area Racial and Ethnic Mix from 2000 to 2020. Data from United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2000 and 2010, Table P7, and 2020, Table P1.

Right: Comparison of Racial and Ethnic Mix in Study Area, Berkeley, and Alameda County. Data from United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2020, Table P1.

² United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2010, Table P7. 2020, Table P1.

³ To learn more about the MTC/ABAG's EPC designation and methodology, visit mtc.ca.gov.

Economic Vitality Conditions

San Pablo Avenue is a unique commercial corridor in Berkeley, historically defined by regional and specialty businesses, along with uses connected to industry and manufacturing. Previous city plans and economic assessments have characterized San Pablo Avenue in ways that remain relevant today:

- **Historic industrial identity:** Once a center for manufacturing and production, the West Berkeley neighborhoods adjacent to San Pablo Avenue still include industrially zoned areas. Automotive and repair-related businesses continue to operate in the Specific Plan Area, contributing to the local and regional economy.⁴

- **Commerce and production:** Many businesses in the Specific Plan Area produce goods on-site and sell directly to customers, occupying a niche at the intersection of commerce and light industry.⁴
- **Regional destination:** San Pablo Avenue functions primarily as a destination for specialized goods and services, such as auto repair, construction materials, home improvement, specialty retail, and restaurants, rather than serving as a walkable, neighborhood-serving retail district.⁵

This strong regional identity can at times be at odds with local aspirations for a more walkable, mixed-use environment that supports multi-modal transportation options, a broad range of businesses, and new infill housing.

Vacancy and Broader Economic Impacts

San Pablo Avenue experienced a significant rise in ground-floor commercial vacancies in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from the City of Berkeley's Office of Economic Development indicates that San Pablo Avenue's ground floor commercial vacancy rate (by square footage) doubled from 5.5% in 2017 to 10.8% in 2022. The rate peaked in 2023 at 15.5%, reflecting ongoing challenges for local businesses.

By 2024, the vacancy rate had declined to 7.1% along San Pablo Avenue⁶, though there was a slight increase through 2025 to 8.44%⁷. By comparison, the average citywide vacancy rate was 7.5% in 2024 and 6.3%⁸ in 2026.

During the planning process, there were several high-profile closures along San Pablo Avenue, many of which were establishments with broad name recognition and historic and cultural significance in Berkeley. KC's BBQ, for instance, was a Black-owned, family-run business that first opened in 1968; Kirsten Davis, a third-generation co-owner told [NBC Bay Area in April 2023](#) that "The brick and mortar are a monster for a lot of small businesses. People are trying to find funding and to hold onto and retain employees."

Despite these closures, the decline in vacancy rate and the arrival of new neighborhood-serving businesses

suggest that the Specific Plan Area could be on the cusp of a period of renewal. The Specific Plan aims to build on these conditions by encouraging small business retention, improving storefront vitality, and reinforcing the Specific Plan Area's role as a diverse, mixed-use district.



Figure 1.7 Vacant Storefront along San Pablo Avenue.
Photo by CD+A. August, 2023

⁴ City of Berkeley. Office of Economic Development's 2016 Economic Development Work Session, 2016. p.9, 13.

⁵ City of Berkeley. [2022 Economic Dashboard](#). Office of Economic Development, 2022.

⁶ City of Berkeley. [Berkeley Economic Dashboards Update](#), 25 Feb. 2025, p. 3. Accessed 6 May 2025.

⁷ City of Berkeley. [2025 Commercial District Dashboard](#). Office of Economic Development, Feb. 2026.

⁸ City of Berkeley. [2025 Economic Dashboard](#), Feb. 2026.

Planning Context

The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan is a key component of Berkeley's broader long-range planning efforts. The Specific Plan's policies and implementation strategy reflect recent changes in State housing and land use law that require a new approach to local planning. The Specific Plan is consistent with State guidance for the preparation of a specific plan, as identified in the California Government Code §65450-65457.

Regulatory Context

Citywide Policies

The City's **General Plan**, adopted in 2002, outlines Berkeley's long-range vision and priorities for growth, development, and conservation. It includes elements on Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Disaster Preparedness and Safety, Open Space and Recreation, Environmental Management, Economic Development and Employment, Urban Design and Preservation, Citizen Participation, and Implementation.

The Specific Plan will serve as an extension of the General Plan, providing policy and regulatory guidance tailored to the Specific Plan Area. All land-use decisions are consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan.

The **Housing Element** of the City's General Plan serves as the City's framework for housing goals, policies, and programs for meeting existing and future housing needs and increasing affordable housing opportunities to accommodate the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) established by the State. In the 2023-2031 Housing Element Update, approximately 31%, or 2,023, of the housing units needed to accommodate the RHNA fall within the Specific Plan Area, indicating the Specific Plan Area's potential to accommodate a significant share of future housing. The Housing Element also identified land use and zoning actions to help meet the RHNA, including the implementation *Program 27- Priority Development Areas (PDAs), Commercial and Transit Corridors* to develop San Pablo Avenue as a PDA.

The **West Berkeley Plan** (adopted in 1993, amended in 2011, and retired in 2026 with adoption of this Specific Plan) defined the City's key land use, environmental, economic development, transportation, housing and social services, and physical form policies for West Berkeley, which includes the Specific Plan Area, as well as parts of the broader Study Area to the west of San Pablo Avenue. The West Berkeley Plan defined West

Berkeley's land use to support desired economic development, as well as identified retail "nodes", including those that were "designated nodes" in the C-W West Berkeley Commercial District zoning standards.

With the adoption of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, the West Berkeley Plan has been retired. Additional details can be found in **Chapter 3 Land Use** and in **Chapter 6 Administration Implementation**.

Regional Policies

The PDA designation stems from **Plan Bay Area 2050**, which is a long-range regional plan developed by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG).⁹ Plan Bay Area 2050 includes strategies to improve housing, the economy, transportation, and the environment with a focus on the region. As part of this effort, PDAs in Berkeley were identified by the City and Bay Area Metro to promote sustainable development patterns for jobs and housing in walkable and transit-oriented infill locations. The PDA designation increases the City's eligibility for funding to support improvements in a PDA and improvements outside of a PDA that provide benefit to it.

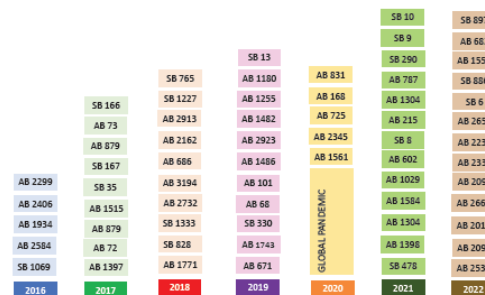
⁹ More information regarding Priority Development Areas (PDAs) can be found on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Website mtc.ca.gov.

State Legislation

Many State laws and regional policies related to housing and land use have been approved since the adoption of the City's General Plan in 2002. The Berkeley Municipal Code continues to be updated to remain consistent with these laws and policies. Many recent State laws have made changes to the development review and approval process, timeline, and requirements, as well as defined limitations on the City's discretion regarding project approval, conformance with certain development standards, and the applicability of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

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



Example of increase in approved housing-related legislation between 2016-2022

Figure 1.8 Key California Laws that Support Housing
Graphic by UPP, 2025

Relationship to other Planning Documents and Projects

Other related plans and improvements that support the goals of the Specific Plan are discussed in their respective chapters. Key connections to the Specific Plan are summarized below:

- The 2016 **San Pablo Avenue Commercial Corridor Report** highlighted the area's economic growth and diversity, identifying long-term opportunities for land use, transportation, and public realm improvements. While it did not propose immediate actions, its recommendations, such as sidewalk upgrades, public art, and branding, helped inform the goals of **Chapter 4 Economic Development**.
- Previous planning efforts have addressed streetscape issues along San Pablo Avenue. The **San Pablo Avenue Public Improvements Plan**, adopted on December 7, 2004, aimed to enhance San Pablo Avenue for pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, and transit users, while also supporting revitalization of the surrounding area. While some improvements have been implemented, others remain unaddressed or are outdated. The Specific Plan includes updated streetscape standards as part of its public realm improvement strategy, outlined in **Chapter 5 Streets**. The Public Improvements Plan was retired with the adoption of the Specific Plan, see **Chapter 6 Administration and Implementation**.
- The **Transit-First Policy Implementation Plan** (2022) identifies San Pablo Avenue as a Primary Transit Route and a corridor for future study of transit infrastructure needs based on the AC Transit Major Corridors Study (2016). It describes the **Alameda CTC's San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project** as the lead effort for designing transit improvements along the Avenue. Concurrent with the Specific Plan development, the Alameda CTC San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project is providing key improvements in the Specific Plan Area to improve safety and transit reliability along San Pablo Avenue.
- The **2023–2031 Housing Element** includes aims to establish clear and objective development standards in compliance with State law, while reassessing land uses and permitting processes to support future growth along these key corridors. The **San Pablo Avenue Design Standards Document** has been developed with the goal of creating cohesive, high-level design guidance that aligns with the citywide approach.

Community Engagement and Specific Plan Development Process

The Specific Plan’s community engagement process provided multiple opportunities for participants to share perspectives, ideas and feedback, representing a broad range of existing and future residents, workers, business owners, property owners, and street users. The process also included close collaboration with City staff and included regular discussions with the Planning Commission and City Councilmembers, as well as collaboration with staff from regional planning and transportation agencies.

Engagement Events and Methods

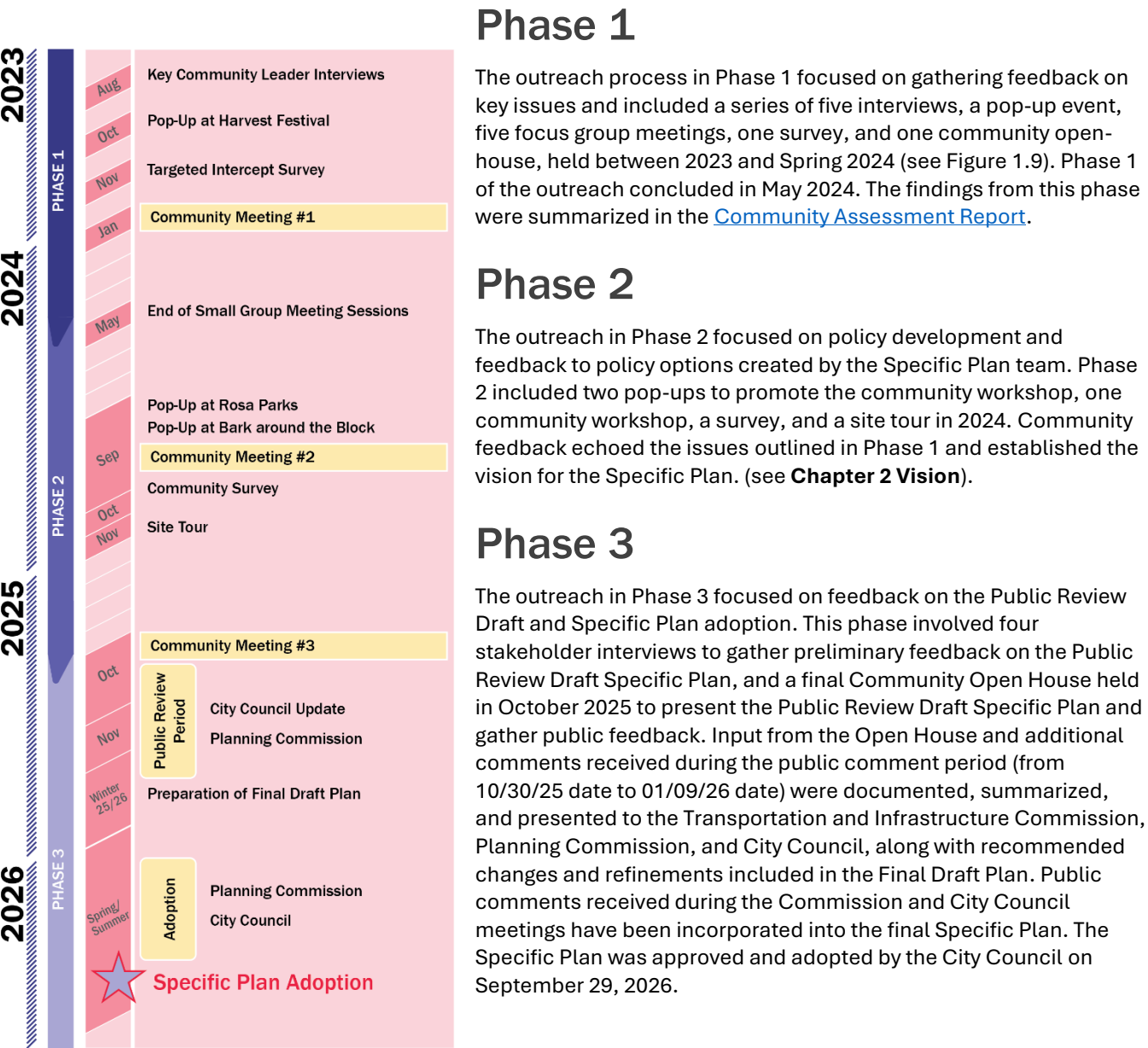


Figure 1.9 Community Engagement Timeline



What We've Heard

The community expressed strong support for developing more affordable, mixed-income housing, with a majority in favor of higher-intensity development along San Pablo Avenue. However, some participants voiced concerns that excessive building height or bulk could create a “tunnel effect” limiting sunlight and worsening the pedestrian experience.

There was broad agreement that the current sidewalks and mobility conditions are inadequate. Participants emphasized the need for safety and public realm improvements, including wider sidewalks, better pedestrian lighting, additional greenery, and public art to enhance comfort, livability and street identity.

Community members also supported activating ground floors with flexible commercial and creative uses. This approach is intended to reduce vacancies, prevent inactive storefronts, and strengthen the overall pedestrian experience in the Specific Plan Area.

Marcel Pardo Ariza: Municipal Artist-in-Residence

As part of the 2023-2024 Print Public Municipal Artist-in-Residence at Kala Art Institute, artist Marcel Pardo Ariza worked with Robert Rivera and the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan process. In response to the San Pablo Avenue Corridor Study and in dialogue with local community members, Marcel Pardo Ariza highlighted and celebrated seven local businesses along San Pablo Avenue: CASA LATINA, Belmo Cafe, Middle East Market, Heyma Yemeni Coffee, Rainbow Donuts, Everett & Jones, and Mi Ranchito Bayside Market. Through this exploration, Ariza emphasized the critical role these businesses play in the fabric and legacy of the community, underscoring the urgent need for City

support in a landscape where vacant retail spaces proliferate across the Bay Area.

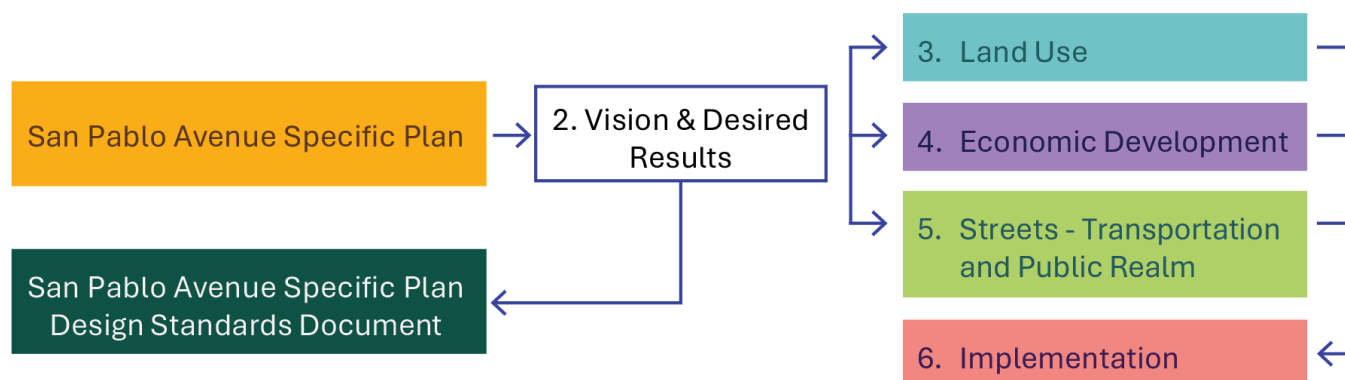
As part of the Municipal Artist-in-Residence, Marcel Pardo Ariza and Cheryl Derricotte presented their exhibition *Roadwork* at Kala Gallery from October 24, 2024, to February 14, 2025.



Figure 1.10 Images of Marcel's work for the *Roadwork* Exhibition
Photos by Marcel Pardo Ariza, 2024

Specific Plan Organization

The Specific Plan is organized into six chapters.



Chapter 1 serves as the introduction to the Specific Plan, while **Chapter 2** lays out the visions and goals of the Specific Plan. **Chapters 3 through 5** form the core of the Specific Plan, outlining the proposed policies, programs, and standards that advance the vision and goals established in Chapter 2. While each chapter focuses on a primary topic, they are not mutually exclusive, and therefore, many policies are interrelated and advance the overall vision and goals across multiple topic areas. For example, policies in the Land Use (Chapter 3) and Streets – Transportation and Public Realm (Chapter 5) chapters also support economic development (covered in Chapter 4) by shaping where commercial and retail activity is prioritized as well as the pedestrian experience throughout the Specific Plan Area.

The Specific Plan concludes with **Chapter 6 Administration and Implementation**, which summarizes key priorities and actions needed to carry out the Specific Plan across each topic area.

The Specific Plan is accompanied by the **San Pablo Avenue Design Standards Document (Design Standards Document)**. The Design Standards Document is a tool to help implement the vision and guiding principles of the Specific Plan. The intent of the Design Standards Document is to work in coordination with the policies of the Specific Plan to implement its vision. The Design Standards Document provides a clear set of objective standards while allowing flexibility and creativity in design. In addition to the standards contained in the Zoning Ordinance, projects must comply with the Design Standards Document.

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Key Existing Conditions
- Appendix B: Opportunity Sites
- Appendix C: Buildout Summary Memorandum
- Appendix D: Street Improvements

How to use this Document

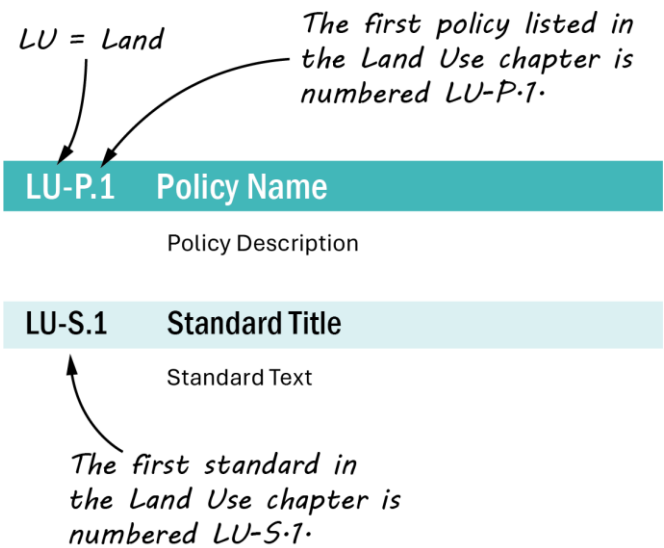
This Specific Plan includes land use, economic development, public space, and transportation policies and standards to support the Vision and Desired Outcomes outlined in **Chapter 2 Vision**. To ensure clarity and ease of use:

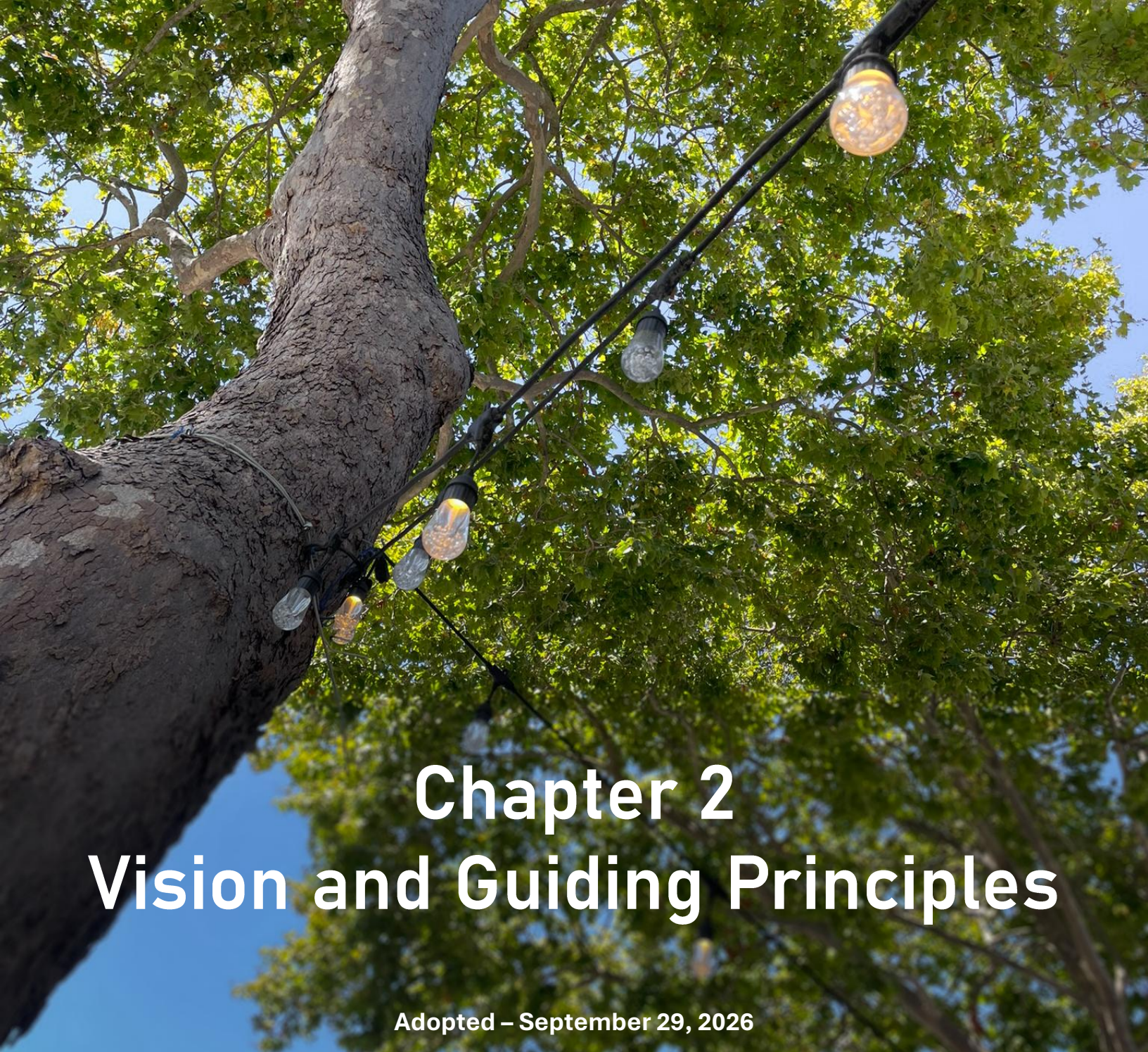
Policies are the core statements of intent that guide decision-making. They articulate the policies that will guide and shape future development, community benefits, public investment, and implementation actions to achieve the community’s vision and desired outcomes for the Specific Plan Area. Policies are organized in the *Land Use, Economic Development, and Streets* chapters. Each policy is numbered using the first letters of their respective chapter, followed by a “P” and a sequential number. For example, the first policy listed in the **Chapter 3 Land Use** is numbered “LU-P.1”. All policies appear in the chapter’s designated color.

Standards are measurable requirements that implement the Specific Plan’s policies. They include zoning regulations and development requirements. Standards follow the same numbering system as the policies, using “S” instead of “P”. For example, the first standard in the **Chapter 3 Land Use** is numbered “LU-S.1”. All Standards appear in the chapter’s designated color.

Specific standards are provided directly under the policy they intend to implement. These standards indicate their direct relationship to the corresponding policy. The land use and development standards are summarized in the Specific Plan while the detailed standards are in the Berkeley Municipal Code and the Design Standards Document.

Chapter 6 Administration and Implementation includes a discussion of the environmental review of the Specific Plan; a series of Implementation Tables, which outlines implementation actions, responsibilities, timelines, and funding mechanisms to carry out the Specific Plan’s goals, and a discussion of how the Specific Plan will be administered including how it can be amended over time.





Chapter 2

Vision and Guiding Principles

Adopted – September 29, 2026

The community envisions the Specific Plan Area as a mixed-use district that is integrated with the neighborhoods and employment areas that surround it.

“[We need a] [l]ively corridor where people from all walks of life can enjoy, mingle, and support local businesses. Good mix of housing, restaurants, stores (and grocery stores).”

– Open House Comment

Central to this vision is redefining San Pablo Avenue not simply as a car-centric corridor, but as a place that connects east to west Berkeley and serves as an extension of surrounding neighborhoods.

Vision

“It is essential to ensure that the plan addresses the needs of the historically underserved communities around San Pablo Avenue.”

– Community advocate from Beautiful San Pablo

More Housing Choices

The Specific Plan encourages more housing along San Pablo Avenue, offering more variety of unit types and building designs that meet the needs of residents ranging from young singles to families, seniors, and others. New and refined design standards, land use, and other policies for new development, paired with incentives for community-oriented spaces, seek to foster social interaction, support local businesses, and strengthen connections between new residents and the broader community.

Increased Business Activity to Support a Thriving Community

The Specific Plan envisions San Pablo Avenue as a vibrant and economically resilient corridor with welcoming storefronts, active ground floors, and businesses that contribute to an engaging public realm. Support for small and locally owned businesses encourages activation of ground-floor spaces and fosters a diverse mix of creative, community-oriented uses. Partnerships between businesses, the City, and neighborhood groups will facilitate community and cultural events that strengthen the identity of the Avenue and establish San Pablo Avenue as a distinctive mixed-use district.

“It is our urban center or spine. Be more for the people that live here. [We are] [m]issing boutiques, groceries, and practical things.”

– Open House Comment

Enhanced Interaction Between Public and Private Spaces

The Specific Plan envisions streets where public and private spaces interact to support daily life and community vitality. Wider sidewalks, small plazas, and other gathering spaces provide welcoming places or “third spaces” for recreation, social interaction, and community events. Investments in street furniture, lighting, and landscaping aim to enhance safety, comfort, and accessibility for people of all ages and abilities, while preserving and expanding the tree canopy to create a greener, more inviting streetscape.

Enhanced Local and Citywide Access

“San Pablo Avenue 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.)”

– Open House Comment

The Specific Plan aims to build upon ongoing City-led and broader, regional efforts to transform San Pablo Avenue into a safe, inclusive, and welcoming thoroughfare that prioritizes access and mobility for people of all ages and abilities. By improving crossings, lighting, and streetscape design, and by supporting reliable transit and active transportation options, the street network can better connect residents to neighborhoods, parks, jobs, and the waterfront. This integrated approach reduces reliance on cars while preserving essential vehicle access and circulation.

Guiding Principles

How does the vision translate into guiding principles? The table below outlines the guiding principles for each policy area. The table also illustrates where to find more detailed information about each policy area within the Specific Plan. The Specific Plan chapters are abbreviated as follows: LU = Land Use, ED = Economic Development, PR = Streets and Public Realm, T = Streets and Transportation. The *Design Standards Document* is abbreviated: DS = Design Standards.



More Housing Choices

Revised Housing Development Regulations	LU, DS
Increased Housing Affordability	LU
Support a Range of Housing for Diverse Resident Needs	LU
Encourage Engaging Buildings and Site Frontages	LU, DS



Increased Business Activity to Support a Thriving Community

Increased Local Business Vitality and Growth	LU, ED
Reduced Vacancy of Ground Floor Space	LU, ED, PR, DS
Identifiable Commercial Areas with Stronger Business Presence	LU, ED, DS



Enhanced Interaction Between Public and Private Spaces

Increased Amount and Quality of Sidewalk Space	LU, T, PR
Improved Streetscape	PR
More Public Open Space and Community Gathering Spaces	PR, DS
More Public Art in Public Space and on Buildings	PR, DS
Increased Cultural Programming and other Community Activity in Public Space	LU, ED, PR



Enhanced Local and Citywide Access

Enhanced Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Access	T, PR, DS
Improved Transit Access and Frequency/Availability	T
Reduced Number and Severity of Collisions	T
Improved Management of On-Street Parking and Loading	T



Chapter 3 Land Use

Adopted – September 29, 2026

The land uses along San Pablo Avenue have been shifting away from an historically regional-serving, auto-oriented land use pattern of primarily commercial and light industrial businesses. The Specific Plan Area is now seeing the addition of higher density residential and more local-serving commercial uses that are beginning to transform the Specific Plan Area into a more vibrant, mixed-use district.

This chapter establishes a land use and development framework to help achieve the community's vision, focusing on policies and development standards that will achieve the following outcomes:

- ★ Increase the variety of housing types and the supply of housing at all affordability levels;
- ★ Support commercial vitality and reduce ground-floor vacancies;

- ★ Promote active, pedestrian-oriented development and public realm improvements; and
- ★ Coordinate land use with transportation and infrastructure investments.

Together with policies and programs in **Chapter 4 Economic Development**, **Chapter 5 Streets - Transportation and Public Realm**, as well as the *Design Standards Document*, and **Chapter 6 Administration and Implementation**, the Land Use policies and standards provide a unified framework to guide the continued transformation of the Specific Plan Area into a mixed-use district that supports Berkeley's housing,

equity, and economic goals while strengthening its role as a central place for community life.

The Specific Plan supersedes the 1993 West Berkeley Plan for all properties within the Specific Plan Area while carrying forward its key goals related to land use and community character. All future development must comply with both this Specific Plan and the Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC). Title 23 of the BMC contains the zoning provisions that implement the Specific Plan, and any topics not addressed here are governed by the BMC, applicable building codes, and other local, County, State, and federal laws and regulations.



Summary of Community Vision

As detailed in **Chapter 2 Vision and Guiding Principles**, the community envisions the Specific Plan Area as a mixed-use district that is integrated with the neighborhoods and employment areas that surround it. The Plan Area serves Berkeley's broad range of community members and continues to support citywide and regional needs.

Existing Local and State Land Use Policies and Standards

The Specific Plan land use framework is guided by both recent State housing laws and the City's 2023-2031 Housing Element Update (HEU). State laws – including the Housing Accountability Act (HAA), Density Bonus Law, Senate Bills (SB) 35 and 330, and more recently Assembly Bill (AB) 130 and SB 131 – have made changes to the development review process, timelines, and requirements, and have defined limitations on the City's discretion regarding project approval, conformance with certain development standards, and the applicability of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). These State laws have modified the City's review process and have resulted in more streamlined review.

At a local level, the City's Housing Element Update (HEU) establishes goals, policies, and programs to address housing affordability, preservation, production, and equity. Of particular relevance, **Program 27 – Priority Development Areas, Commercial and Transit Corridors**, directed the initiation of the Specific Plan to increase densities, evaluate design standards and public improvements, and incentivize affordable housing. The Specific Plan therefore functions as the primary tool to implement Program 27 while aligning with State housing requirements and advancing the City's adopted housing strategies. A full description of applicable State and local policies is provided in **Appendix A**.



Berkeley's Planning Context on Affordable Housing

Housing Element Update establishes a framework to increase affordable housing opportunities, which was a driving factor for the creation of this Specific Plan.

Berkeley's Housing Trust Fund pools funding and administers grants for affordable housing construction and renovation.

Inclusionary Housing Ordinance (BMC 23.328) requires developers to contribute to the growth of affordable housing in the city.

Berkeley's Affordable Housing Preference Policy (July 2023) gives people who have lost or are at risk of losing housing in Berkeley priority when new affordable housing units become available.

Land Use Plan

Existing Land Use and Zoning

The Specific Plan Area contains a mix of residential, commercial, and light manufacturing uses. Residential uses include single-family, multi-family, mixed-use, and live/work uses. There are a variety of existing commercial uses; however, the most common uses include services¹, vehicle service and sales, restaurants, manufacturing uses, and retail establishments. Common business types include automobile repair and home-improvement supply businesses. Many of these businesses are locally owned and operate with brick-and-mortar storefronts, contributing to the street's unique and varied economic profile. As of 2023, there were approximately 2,588 existing housing units in the Specific Plan Area. The

majority of those, about 2,018, are in multi-family buildings with 5 or more units (see Figure 3.1). The Specific Plan Area also includes approximately 1.49 million square feet of commercial space.

Land use is regulated by the City's General Plan and *Zoning Ordinance*. As shown in Figure 3.2, the General Plan land use designation along the entire San Pablo Avenue frontage is Avenue Commercial. As shown in Figure 3.3, the zoning district for properties fronting on San Pablo Avenue is West Berkeley Commercial (C-W). The portion of University Avenue within the Specific Plan Area includes parcels located within the C-W and C-U

¹ Services include personal services such as laundromats and cleaners, as well as professional services such as retail finance services. For additional information, see the *Key Existing Conditions* in **Appendix A**.

(University Avenue Commercial) zoning districts. Other zoning districts within the Specific Plan Area include Mixed Use-Light Industrial (MU-LI), Mixed Use-Residential (MU-R), Restricted Two-Family Residential (R-2), Restricted Multiple-Family Residential (R-2A), and Multi-Family Residential (R-4).

The 1993 West Berkeley Plan and the City's *Zoning Ordinance* also include Commercial Designated Nodes at the following major intersections along San Pablo Avenue: Gilman Street, Cedar Street, University Avenue, Dwight Way, and Ashby Avenue (see Figure 3.4). The purpose of the Designated Nodes is to intensify retail, commercial, and mixed-use activity to support a commercial and pedestrian-oriented environment by requiring new development to include certain ground-floor commercial uses. A full description of existing land uses is provided in **Appendix A**.

C-W Zoning Evaluation

The current C-W zoning district establishes different height limits for single-use and mixed-use residential buildings. Single-use projects, whether residential or commercial, are limited to 3 stories (40 feet), while mixed-use projects may reach 4 stories (50 feet). The additional height allowance for a mixed-use project is intended to encourage the development of ground-floor commercial spaces.

However, feedback from real estate developers during the Specific Plan's community engagement process revealed that in many cases there is insufficient demand for ground floor commercial space. Nevertheless, many projects continue to include ground-floor commercial space because under State Density Bonus Law, the additional residential floor area granted to mixed-use projects typically outweighs the cost of constructing the commercial space, even if it remains vacant. This has contributed to an oversupply of ground-floor commercial space, diluting retail concentration and undermining the intended role of Designated Nodes as focal points for commercial activity.

Plan Area Existing Housing Units

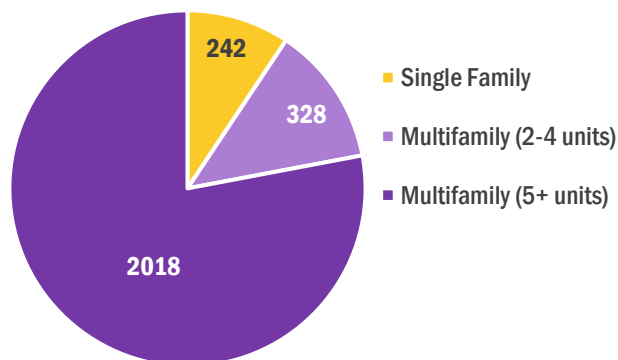


Figure 3.1 Distribution of Existing Housing Units in the Plan Area by Type.

Source: City of Berkeley, 2023.

In response, the Specific Plan process re-evaluated how maximum building height and ground floor use requirements can be structured along San Pablo Avenue to better align with market conditions and achieve the Specific Plan's goal of vibrant, active Designated Nodes.

During the Specific Plan's community engagement process, many community members expressed support for increased residential density and building intensity along San Pablo Avenue to allow for greater housing capacity and economic activity. Overall, participants favored allowing a maximum building height between 8 to 12 stories, with taller buildings being primarily concentrated at the Ashby, University, and Gilman Designated Nodes.

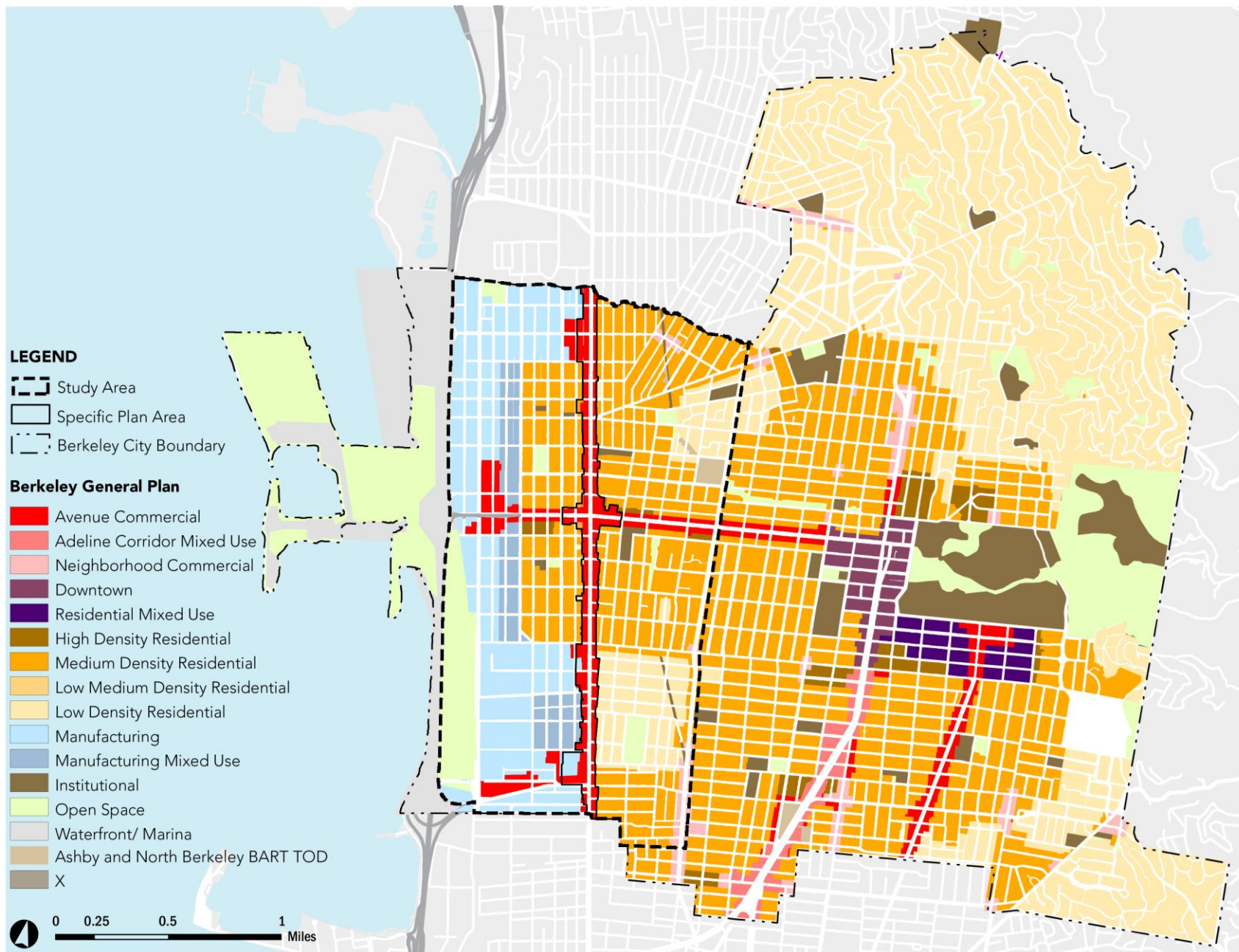


Figure 3.2 Existing Berkeley General Plan Land Use Designations

Source: City of Berkeley, 2023 and CD+A, 2025

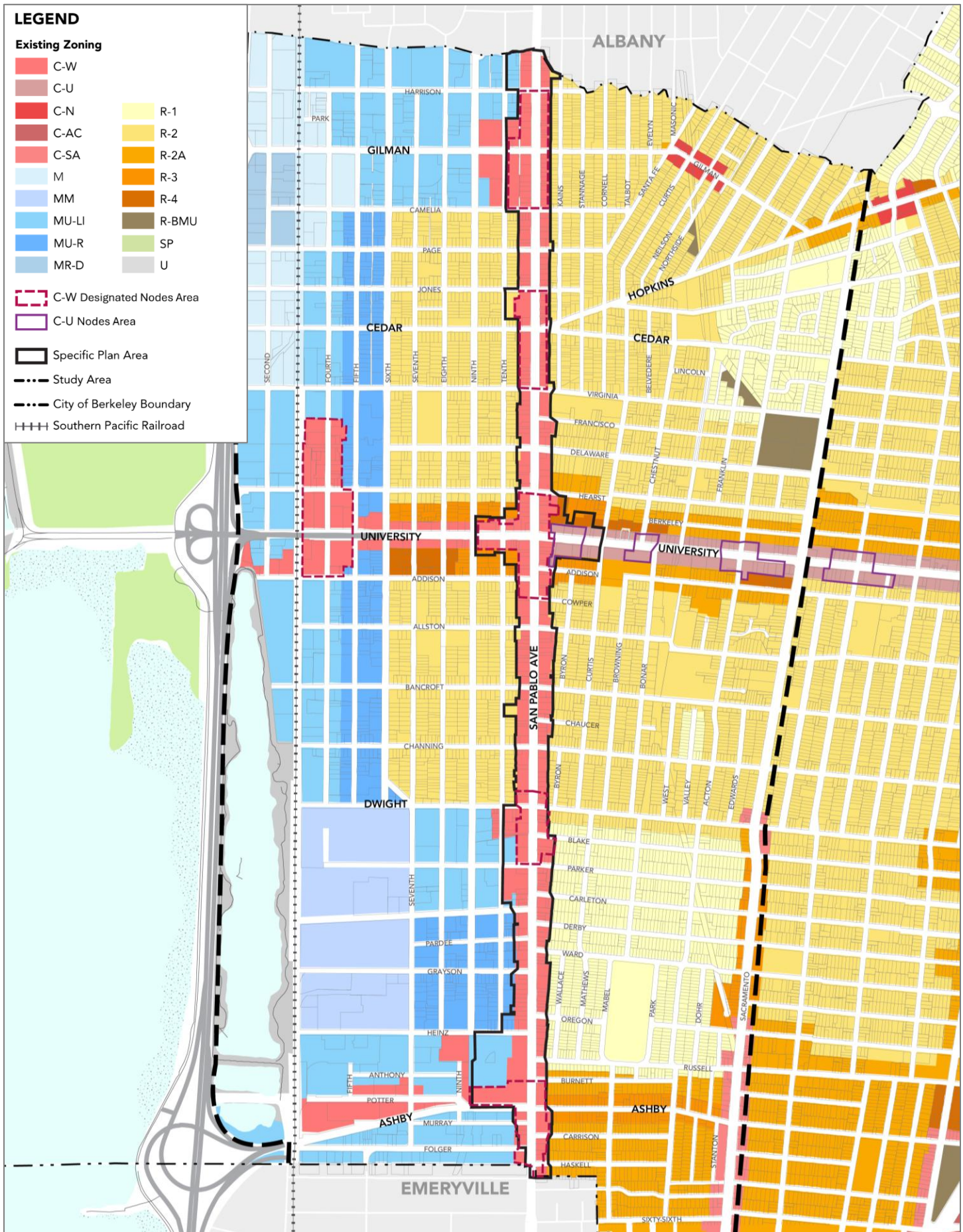


Figure 3.3 Existing Zoning Map

with C-W and C-U Designated Nodes in the Specific Plan Area. Source: City of Berkeley, 2023, CD+A, 2026

Land Use and Zoning Policies and Standards

This section details the land use and zoning policies and standards for the Specific Plan Area. The policies and standards reflect and align with current community needs, development patterns, and State and local legislation.

The land use policies and standards work in tandem with existing City policies, programs and standards, the *Zoning Ordinance*, the *Design Standards Document*, as well as with the Specific Plan’s policies regarding transportation, public realm, and economic development. These elements support the Specific Plan’s guiding principles, which are:

- More Housing Choices
- Increased Business Activity to Support a Thriving Community
- Enhanced Interaction Between Public and Private Spaces

- Enhanced Local and Citywide Access

In alignment with these guiding principles, the land use policies and standards seek to:

- Concentrate retail uses and active ground floor uses within Designated Nodes.
- Provide design standards to ensure the viability of newly constructed ground-floor commercial space.
- Provide incentives for development to enhance and expand the public realm.

Zoning, Nodes, and Development Policies (P) and Standards (S)

The boundary of the Specific Plan Area was informed by MTC/ABAG’s Plan Bay Area 2050 (2021) Priority Development Area (PDA)². During the boundary assessment, the PDA boundary was refined based on attributes such as split zoning, near-term development, ownership, or other boundary inconsistencies.

Within the Specific Plan Area, the following policies and standards apply as follows:

- Parcels located on San Pablo Avenue and select parcels on University Avenue are subject to the newly established Commercial San Pablo (C-SP) zoning district (see *LU-P.1 Establish the Commercial San Pablo (C-SP) District*). Select parcels within the MU-LI zoning district are eligible for affordable and family friendly housing (see *LU-P.5 Facilitate Housing on MU-LI Parcels*)
- Parcels within residential districts are not subject to any Specific Plan policy, unless explicitly mentioned.
- The San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program (*LU-P.10 Establish a Pilot San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program*) applies to all parcels within the Specific Plan Area.

Originally known as part of the Lincoln Highway in the early 1900s, San Pablo Avenue shaped West Berkeley’s history by fostering a hub of diverse working-class communities. San Pablo Avenue’s historic industrial identity is still visible today, with many businesses producing and selling goods on-site, and a highly diverse mix of commercial activities.

For more details on the history of San Pablo, see **Chapter 1, Significance of the San Pablo Avenue Corridor**.

LU-P.1 Establish the Commercial San Pablo (C-SP) District

The Specific Plan establishes the Commercial San Pablo (C-SP) District to replace the existing Commercial West Berkeley (C-W) and Commercial University (C-U) zoning districts within the Specific Plan Area (see Figure 3.3). The C-SP zoning district increases residential, commercial, and mixed-use development intensity within the Specific Plan Area by allowing greater building height, density and floor area ratio (FAR), and reducing minimum setbacks.

² See **Chapter 1, Definition of Specific Plan Area**

LU-P.2 Focus Commercial Uses within Designated Nodes

The Specific Plan utilizes the existing Designated Node structure adopted with the West Berkeley Plan to strategically concentrate commercial uses at key intersections with crossing transit routes. These are the same Designated Nodes, with some modifications, identified in the West Berkeley Plan and the existing C-W zoning district regulations.

Designated Nodes are located at the intersections of San Pablo Avenue and the following cross streets: Gilman Street, Cedar Street, University Avenue, Dwight Way, and Ashby Avenue.

To preserve and encourage active street frontages with commercial, retail, and community-serving uses within Designated Nodes, ground-floor frontages, regardless of use, are required to provide a connection between the public realm and ground floor activities (see *LU-P.9 Establish Ground Floor Form Types to Promote Pedestrian-Scaled and Flexible Ground Floors* and the *Design Standards Document* for design standards). Recognizing the need for flexibility over the course of this long-range plan, land use policies expand allowed uses and promote short-term uses, while ensuring flexibility for changing uses and future adaptation (see *LU-P.8 Expand Allowed Primary and Temporary Uses*). Together, these policies are intended to balance near-term flexibility with long-term commercial viability.



Figure 3.4 Proposed San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Designated Nodes

Source: CD+A, City of Berkeley, 2026

LU-P.3 Boundary Adjustments and Re-zonings

The Specific Plan establishes the C-SP zoning district (see Figure 3.5). The boundary derives from the Plan Bay Area 2050 (2021) Priority Development Area (PDA) (see **Chapter 1**, *Regional Policies* for more information); as outlined in *LU-P.1 Establish the Commercial San Pablo (C-SP) District* and the C-SP Designated Nodes, as described in *LU-P.2 Focus Commercial Uses within Designated Nodes*. To ensure consistency with the City's *Zoning Ordinance*, the following rezoning actions are included with adoption of the Specific Plan:

- Rezone all existing C-W parcels on San Pablo Avenue within the Specific Plan Area to C-SP.
- Rezone existing C-U parcels within the Specific Plan Area to C-SP.
- Rezone 12 parcels to C-SP. These parcels front either San Pablo Avenue or University Avenue. In cases where the split-zoned portion of a parcel fronts on a side-street, the split zone is maintained.
- Establish new C-SP Designated Nodes within the Specific Plan Area.

Parcels in the Specific Plan Area located within the MU-LI, R-1, R-2, or R-3 zoning districts would not be re-zoned to C-SP. While these parcels are located within the PDA boundary, they are not subject to any of the above rezoning actions. Only the following land use policies and standards in this chapter apply to these parcels: *LU-P.10 Establish a San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program* and *LU-P.11 Artists Housing and Cultural Districts*.

LU-P.4 Amend the General Plan and Map

The Specific Plan requires amendments to the General Plan and Zoning Map to implement policies of the Specific Plan, such as establishing the C-SP zoning district, Designated Nodes, and Affordable and Family Friendly Housing on certain parcels in the MU-LI zoning district to support higher-density development in the Specific Plan Area. General Plan amendments include text changes to the Avenue Commercial Land Use designation to incorporate the C-SP zoning district and a map amendment to re-designate parcels within the C-SP zoning district as Avenue Commercial (AC), as well as amendments to the University Avenue Strategic Plan text to remove the existing San Pablo Avenue Node, and retirement of the West Berkeley Plan.

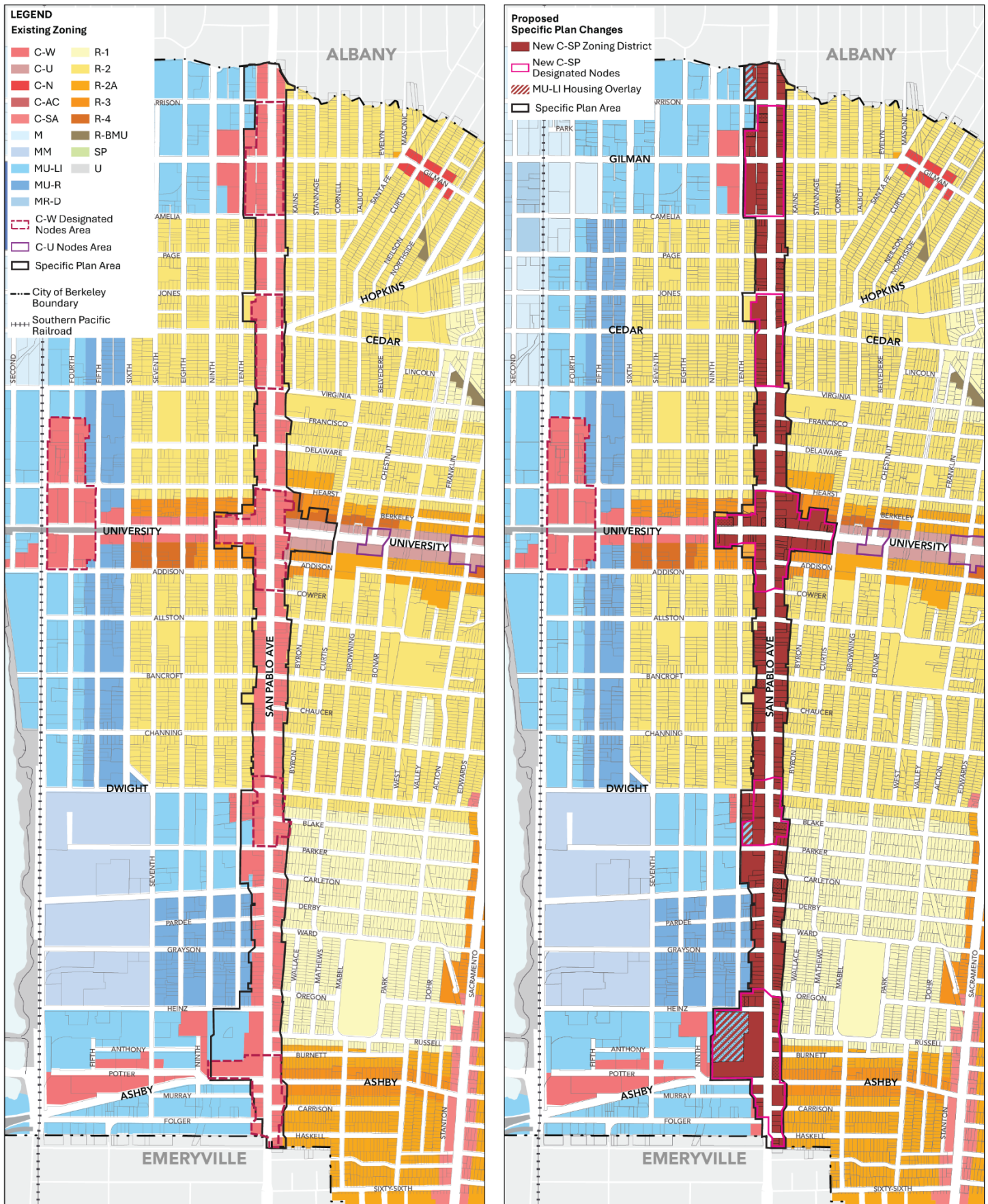


Figure 3.5 Existing and Proposed Zoning Map with Designated Nodes in the Specific Plan Area
 Left: Existing Zoning. Right: Proposed Zoning. Source: City of Berkeley, 2023 and CD+A, 2025.

LU-P.5 Facilitate Housing on MU-LI Parcels

To support City efforts toward meeting regional housing goals, the Specific Plan enables housing to be developed on appropriate MU-LI parcels within the Specific Plan Area (see Figure in the BMC). Recognizing the unique constraints and value created by allowing housing on these parcels, the Specific Plan allows two types of housing:

- 100 percent affordable housing; and
- Family-sized housing projects that dedicate at least 35 percent of the project’s total residential unit floor area to units containing either two or three bedrooms

Eligible projects shall comply with the C-SP zoning district development standards (see *Zoning Ordinance*).

These two paths consider that in 2025, land values in the MU-LI district were approximately half the value of comparable residentially zoned sites. This is primarily due to the prohibition on residential use within the MU-LI district, as well as the lower rents commanded by industrial uses. By allowing the housing in development projects to be either 100 percent affordable and/or provide 50 percent of their gross residential unit floor area as family-sized units, this policy intends to improve the ability of affordable housing developers to acquire these sites and ensure that new housing better serves families in Berkeley.

While these parcels are in “moderate resource” census tracts and may be less competitive for some State affordable housing funding, this policy creates a clear zoning pathway that enables housing development as additional funding becomes available. It also addresses a gap in State housing laws, which generally do not permit residential development in manufacturing districts, by creating a local mechanism for housing that allows the development of mixed-use residential projects on MU-LI parcels in the Specific Plan Area if it meets the affordability and/or family-sized unit requirements.

LU-P.6 Planning and Commercial Use Permit Streamlining

To support small business vitality in the Specific Plan Area, a one-time review of the City’s efforts to streamline planning approval and building permit processes, including commercial uses, new residential, commercial and mixed-use development, commercial tenant improvements, event permits, and temporary use permits shall be conducted. The review shall include any relevant City processes affecting permitting feasibility and timeline for approvals in the C-SP zoning district.

LU-P.7 Public Open Space Enhancements

The Specific Plan incentivizes high-quality, publicly accessible open space within private development projects in the C-SP zoning district to enhance the pedestrian environment, support placemaking, and deliver community benefits along San Pablo Avenue. Projects that qualify for any of the incentives described in this policy may receive a reduction in the amount of Private Open Space required (see *Zoning Ordinance* for details).

LU-S.1 Sidewalk Expansion Incentive

The Specific Plan incentivizes an additional ground floor front setback, beyond the minimum required setback, for new development that fronts San Pablo Avenue, Gilman Street, Cedar Street, Hopkins Street, University Avenue, Dwight Way, and Ashby Avenue (see *Zoning Ordinance* for details) to improve the pedestrian environment and support street activation along these streets.

PR-S.1 Sidewalk Zone Standards sets required sidewalk widths for any new development that occurs along San Pablo Avenue, Gilman Street, Cedar Street, Hopkins Street, University Avenue, Dwight Way and Ashby Avenue within the Specific Plan Area. The Specific Plan incentivizes additional sidewalk expansion beyond the requirement (see *Zoning Ordinance* for details). Sidewalk design and use must comply with the policies and standards in **Chapter 5, Sidewalk Space** as well as the *Design Standards Document*.

LU-S.2 Privately-Owned Publicly Accessible Open Space within Designated Nodes Incentive

The Specific Plan incentivizes the creation of high-quality privately-owned and publicly accessible open space (POPOS) within Designated Nodes to enhance placemaking and provide community open space (see *Zoning Ordinance* for details and *PR-P.20 Privately Owned Public Open Spaces*). POPOS design and use must comply with the applicable standards and requirements in the *Design Standards Document*.

LU-S.3 Side-Street Plaza Incentive

The Specific Plan incentivizes the creation of side-street plazas to encourage the enhancement of the pedestrian environment and support placemaking along San Pablo Avenue (see *Zoning Ordinance* for details). Specifically, residential, commercial, or mixed-use projects may contribute to designing and building side-street plazas that meet the design, access, maintenance and operation standards described in *PR-P.15 Create Side-Street Plazas* at certain intersections, subject to approval of the Public Works Department.

LU-S.4 Mid-Block Passage Incentive

The Specific Plan incentivizes the creation of public mid-block passages within new through-lot development (defined as a development project site that exceeds more than 170 linear feet of frontage along either San Pablo Avenue or University Avenue). Mid-block passages must comply with the applicable standards and requirements in the *Design Standards Document* and the *Zoning Ordinance*.

When two adjacent sites are developed concurrently, developers are encouraged to coordinate site planning efforts to identify and implement opportunities for mid-block connections or shared access improvements that enhance pedestrian and multimodal circulation.

LU-S.5 Development Standards

As described in *LU-P.1 Establish the Commercial San Pablo (C-SP) District* above, the *Zoning Ordinance* will be amended to establish the C-SP zoning district. The development standards in the C-SP zoning district, which include a maximum floor area ratio for residential only, commercial only and mixed-use development, will define the building envelope for new development in the Specific Plan Area. These standards ensure that new buildings contribute to an active, walkable, and inclusive public realm within the Specific Plan Area. The standards support a variety of building types and intensities to ensure flexibility over the course of this long-range plan. These standards are complemented by the *Design Standards Document* and other land use policies and standards in this chapter. Together, the development standards and design standards are intended to foster predictable development standards, and high-quality development outcomes throughout the Specific Plan Area. It is possible that modifications will be made to this Specific Plan over time to maintain consistency with changing State legislation and regulations, as well as to meet the Specific Plan's guiding principles.

LU-S.6 Design Standards

Complementary to the development standards in *LU-S.5 Development Standards*, the Specific Plan establishes design standards to ensure that new buildings contribute to an active, walkable, and inclusive public realm within the Specific Plan Area. The design standards support a variety of building types and intensities to ensure flexibility over the course of this long-range plan. The *Design Standards Document* provides objective standards to further the vision and guiding principles of the Specific Plan by:

- Promoting a built form and architectural character that reinforces San Pablo Avenue's distinctive place in the city, that supports walking, and sustains a diverse, active and safe public realm.
- Requiring high-quality design of street-facing building exteriors.
- Minimizing the visual impact of parking.

- Ensuring that building form gives special attention to corner locations to strengthen intersection identity and visibility.
- Ensuring that open space provided in new development supports social interaction and livable outdoor areas while providing a suitable level of privacy for residents.

LU-S.7 Streetscape Standards

The Specific Plan continues to require that new development provide streetscape improvements that meet the Specific Plan's streetscape standards (see *Streetscape* in **Chapter 5**) in the Specific Plan Area. This is an existing requirement in the San Pablo Avenue Public Improvement Plan (2003) that is carried over to this Specific Plan.

Allowed Uses

The Specific Plan aims to provide for a broad mix of land uses that contribute to a vibrant, economically resilient, and pedestrian-oriented Specific Plan Area. The mix of allowed uses serves the community while supporting small businesses, and preserving existing legacy businesses and cultural institutions. Specifically, the following uses are encouraged within the Specific Plan Area:

Residential – Residential uses are allowed anywhere in the Specific Plan Area, either as standalone residential or as part of a mixed-use project. Within Designated Nodes, live/work units are prohibited fronting any street, and residential units located on the ground floor are prohibited fronting certain streets (for required and allowed floor form types see *LU-P.9 Establish Ground Floor Form Types to Promote Pedestrian-Scaled and Flexible Ground Floors* and the *Design Standards Document*)

Retail & General Commercial – Retail and general commercial, including restaurants and cafés, are allowed throughout the Specific Plan Area, and encouraged at Designated Nodes. Temporary retail and general commercial uses are also permitted with streamlined approvals to reduce vacancies, enhance commercial vibrancy, and support small business.

Public & Quasi-Public – Community-serving and civic uses such as community centers, libraries, schools and cultural institutions are allowed throughout the Specific Plan Area, including fronting any street in Designated Nodes.

Offices & Workspaces – Professional and medical offices, makerspaces and light-industrial uses compatible with residential are permitted in the Specific Plan Area, including on the ground floor fronting any street in Designated Nodes.

Arts & Entertainment - Arts, entertainment, gallery, and studio spaces are encouraged throughout the Specific Plan Area, including on the ground floor fronting any street in Designated Nodes.

LU-P.8 Expand Allowed Primary and Temporary Uses

The Specific Plan expands the list of allowed uses through the C-SP zoning district (see *LU-P.1 Establish the Commercial San Pablo (C-SP) District*), which increases flexibility for both primary and temporary uses. The Specific Plan also provides a pathway for affordable housing development to promote a diverse mix of land uses that support an active, pedestrian-oriented and economically resilient Specific Plan Area (see *LU-P.5 Facilitate Housing on MU-LI Parcels*).

Compared to the existing C-W zoning district, the C-SP zoning district allows for a more active, flexible, and community-oriented mixed-use environment through the following strategies (see the *Zoning Ordinance*):

- Expand the number of allowed uses while prohibiting heavy-industrial and manufacturing uses incompatible with residential uses.

Expanding allowable and temporary uses in the C-SP zoning district provides flexibility to support changing business needs through varying economic conditions over the life of the Specific Plan. For more information and data, see **Chapter 1, Vacancy and Broader Economic Impacts**.

- Expand the number of primary uses permitted with a Zoning Certificate (by-right), such as office uses, public markets, co-working spaces, galleries, and makerspaces (a type of light-industrial use).
- Allow existing off-street parking to be used as a parklet for outdoor commercial and public use(s) by-right, and temporary uses (see Figure 3.6).
- Expand the list of temporary uses allowed with a Zoning Certificate to reduce ground floor vacancies and support small business creation.
- Allow 100 percent affordable housing conversion of existing non-residential buildings in the C-SP, consistent with State law.³
- Allow 100 percent affordable housing or multi-family residential projects that include family-sized housing on certain MU-LI zoned parcels (See *LU-P.5 Facilitate Housing on MU-LI parcels*).
- In the Designated Nodes, allow residential uses beyond a 50 foot depth from the ground floor building frontage.

Adaptive Reuse of Parking Lots

Along 4th Street in Long Beach, CA, a Street Corridor Visioning Study* created a framework for opportunities to activate the pedestrian realm. An idea of “bulb-ins” created pilot plaza spaces at the edge of parking lots that fronted the sidewalk. There is one plaza at the corner of a parking lot that is permanent. The bulb-in concept provides an idea of the types of spaces and activation that are possible with underutilized parcels and parking lots along a commercial corridor.

For a number of years, the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association has hosted ‘Concerts in the Park (in Lot)’ which is a free series of early evening concerts/dances that take place in a portion of a commercial shopping center’s parking lot where people can get food from surrounding restaurants and enjoy the concerts. These events are similar to performances in the Berkeley Downtown Plaza on Shattuck Avenue.



Figure 3.6 Examples of Adaptive Reuse of Parking Lots

Left: Parking Lot “bulb-in” open space, 4th Street, Long Beach. Photo from Long Beach 4th Street Visioning Study, p.23. Right: Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association, 2023. Photo by bixbyknollsinfo.com.

* For more information, see City of Long Beach. Long Beach 4th Street Visioning Study, December 2025.

³ Government Code Sections 65912.100–65912.140.

Ground Floor Form Types

Ground floor design requirements play a critical role in shaping the pedestrian experience, supporting local businesses, and ensuring a vibrant street life. To support the Specific Plan's goals of a more active, pedestrian-oriented, and economically resilient area, the Specific Plan establishes four ground floor form types. These form types are designed to respond to different context conditions within the Specific Plan Area, while providing flexibility to adapt to changing demand over time.

LU-P.9 Establish Ground Floor Form Types to Promote Pedestrian-Scaled and Flexible Ground Floors

The Specific Plan establishes four ground floor form types—Storefront, Active, Residential, and Live/Work—with tailored design standards to support an adaptable and walkable public realm and prioritize transparency, architectural articulation, and seamless adaptability between various commercial uses in the C-SP zoning district (see the *Zoning Ordinance* and the *Design Standards Document*).

Ground Floor Types

Storefront: Designed to allow for visibility from the sidewalk in support of a pedestrian-oriented public realm. These standards allow spaces to respond to changing economic conditions while maintaining compatibility with a wider range of uses. Storefront Ground Floors are required within Designated Nodes with a few exceptions.



Figure 3.7 Storefront Frontage Design
Building fronting San Pablo Avenue. Photo by CD+A

Active: Designed for all non-residential uses, Active Ground Floors provide more design flexibility than Storefront Ground Floors.



Figure 3.8 Example of Active Frontage Design
Building fronting San Pablo Avenue. Photo by CD+A

Residential: Designed for residential units at the ground floor, Residential Ground Floors require a transition or connection from the public sidewalk to a residential unit, including entry patios, stoops, and shallow landscaped setbacks.



Figure 3.9 Elevated Individual Residential Entries
Photo by AWP

Live/work: Designed for the unique needs of spaces that support both living and working at the ground floor outside of Designated Nodes, including requiring a storefront character.



Figure 3.10 Street Facing Frontage of Live/Work Unit
Photo by AWP

San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program

State Density Bonus law allows developers to increase the allowable residential density of a project in exchange for providing affordable housing on-site. The law also allows developers to waive, reduce or modify development standards, such as setbacks, design standards, and open space requirements, as needed to accommodate the affordable units.

Throughout the Specific Plan’s community engagement process, residents emphasized housing goals that extend beyond simply increasing unit production. Key priorities included improving housing affordability, ensuring high-quality housing design that fosters social connection, and increased public open space and community gathering areas.

Establishing a San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program provides an alternative to the State Density Bonus within the Specific Plan Area that allows the City to achieve affordable housing production while maintaining greater control over the form and character of development in the Specific Plan Area. By choosing the San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program, a project applicant can receive the same density benefits as though the State Density Bonus by paying into the City’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund instead of providing units on-site.

By offering a local alternative to the State Density Bonus, the City receives an affordable housing benefit, while maintaining control over which waivers and concessions apply to eligible projects. This Program ensures that important urban design standards and public realm improvements in this Specific Plan—such as active ground floor frontages and open space requirements—are provided.

The City’s Inclusionary Housing policies continue to apply to all market-rate development, meaning every project contributes to affordable housing—either through on-site units or in-lieu fees. The San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program provides an additional pathway for developers to achieve equivalent density while aligning new development with community objectives, particularly in housing affordability, urban design, and public realm improvements.

LU-P.10 Establish a Pilot San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program

The Specific Plan establishes a pilot San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program through an affordable housing benefit for new residential ownership (condominium) projects that is exclusively met through paying an in-lieu fee to the City’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The following components shall be included in the program:

Program Exclusivity

- Should a project utilize the San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program, the project must waive use of State Density Bonus.
- Developers must declare their choice to use either the San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program or State Density Bonus at the time of application.

Affordable Housing Contribution

- In-lieu fee shall be placed in the City of Berkeley’s Housing Trust Fund equivalent to the City’s Inclusionary Housing in-lieu fee (currently \$62.83 per square foot of residential floor area).
- Funds shall be prioritized for projects within the Specific Plan Area to support the creation and preservation of affordable housing.
- Fund management and allocation will be determined in accordance with the City of Berkeley Housing Trust Fund and Small Sites Program Guidelines, as amended.

Incentives

Bonus density, waivers, and concessions under this program shall mirror the structure of the State Density Bonus, with the exception that the City may identify certain standards (e.g., ground floor design) that are not eligible for waiver under the San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program.

Art and Culture

The Specific Plan’s policies supporting increased flexibility for temporary uses and encouraging pop-up uses in parking lots and otherwise vacant ground floor space creates opportunities for arts and craft galleries, studios, and makerspaces in the Specific Plan Area, which would support creation of an art and cultural district.

LU-P.11 Artists Housing and Cultural Districts

State law allows for locally required affordable housing to be set aside for artists within one-half mile of a State-designated cultural district or a similar local designated district.⁴ The Specific Plan Area is not currently within one-half mile of such a district. However, if the City designates a cultural district that is within one-half mile of the Specific Plan Area, consideration should be given to creating an affordable artist housing area within the Specific Plan Area. Creation of this area should be coordinated with the Civic Arts Commission and the Housing Advisory Commission to support additional affordable housing while strengthening craftsmanship, cultural representation and identity within the Specific Plan Area. See Figure 3.11 for an example of art within the Specific Plan Area.

As part of the 2023-2024 Print Public Municipal Artist-in-Residence at Kala Institute, artist Marcel Pardo Ariza researched and documented the culture and diversity along San Pablo Avenue. Interviews with business owners documenting hopes, fears and opportunities on the changing landscape are available in **Chapter 4, Interviews with Business Owners**.



Figure 3.11 Wall Mural
1901 San Pablo Avenue.
Photo by CD+A

Opportunity Sites and Potential Buildout

The most substantial redevelopment opportunities in the Specific Plan Area consist of the 51 Housing Opportunity Sites identified in the City’s Housing Element Update (HEU), along with an additional 15 sites identified through the Specific Plan process.

In the HEU, Opportunity Sites are 1 of 3 categories in the State-required Housing Sites Inventory. The inventory demonstrates that there is adequate land for the City to meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The 3 site types are:

- Likely Sites – parcels with approved housing projects (at the time of the HEU).
- Pipeline Sites – parcels with housing applications in process (at the time of the HEU).
- Opportunity Sites – parcels without active redevelopment applications that are either vacant or underutilized and have near-term potential for residential or mixed-use development.

The classification of Opportunity Sites is important for State housing law because it establishes a jurisdiction’s ability to meet RHNA targets. Opportunity Sites are typically those where development standards, parcel size, infrastructure capacity, and market conditions make residential development feasible within the HEU’s planning period.

The full Housing Element Site’s Inventory is available in the adopted HEU on the City’s website.⁵

⁴ California Government Code Section 65914.8.

⁵ City of Berkeley, Housing Element Sites Inventory, dated 7/28/2023.

https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/HEU_Sites%20Inventory_Tables-webpage.pdf

During the Specific Plan process, an additional 15 parcels were identified that meet the HEU Opportunity Site criteria but were not included in the original inventory (see **Appendix B**). These include parcels that meet at least one of these criteria:

- Have become eligible as Opportunity Sites since adoption of the HEU,
- Share ownership with a HEU-listed Opportunity Site, and/or
- Have site-specific characteristics warranting inclusion despite being omitted from the original list.

Development Potential and Buildout

The Specific Plan estimates the amount of new development that could occur in the Specific Plan Area during the planning period. The estimates are based on 4 categories of development potential:

1. HEU Likely and Pipeline Units – already developed or assumed to develop under existing C-W zoning and development standards.
2. HEU Opportunity Units – assumed to develop under proposed Specific Plan zoning and development standards.
3. New Specific Plan Area Opportunity Units – assumed to develop under proposed Specific Plan zoning development standards.
4. SDB Opportunity Units – assumed to develop from the utilization of State Density Bonus (SDB) on every opportunity site in the Specific Plan Area up to 8-stories.

In addition to housing, the buildout analysis estimates changes in commercial square footage as parcels redevelop. The results are summarized in Table 3.2.

As shown, under maximum buildout assumptions, the Specific Plan Area can accommodate approximately 8,000 new multi-family housing units. This level of housing growth supports an estimated 20,000 new residents, based on the HEU's average household size for multi-family residential.

This potential residential growth represents a significant share of the City's overall housing strategy. In the context of the Housing Element, the Specific Plan Area accounts for a substantial portion of new housing capacity in transit-rich locations. Accordingly, the Specific Plan leverages existing infrastructure and facilitates the creation of a more walkable, mixed-use district near transit.

Approximately 3,500 of these housing units are already anticipated in the HEU, meaning the Specific Plan increases the maximum potential buildout by roughly 4,500 units. This figure represents the maximum theoretical development capacity; actual development depends on market conditions, property owner decisions, and other factors. Not all sites are expected to redevelop within the Specific Plan's time horizon, so the maximum buildout is unlikely to occur.

The increase in development capacity proposed as part of the Specific Plan may affect the amount of commercial square footage within the Specific Plan Area. Although a net decrease in commercial square footage is estimated, it is difficult to quantify the extent of this change under existing zoning regulations given the shifting demand for commercial uses and the high rate of ground floor vacancy. It is expected that the increase in residential development will incrementally reduce opportunities for new commercial uses and eliminate some existing

Table 3.2 Estimated Maximum Buildout

Type	Unit / Sq. Ft.
Residential (Multi-Family)	Units
HEU Likely and Pipeline Units	1,500
HEU Opportunity Units	3,900
New Specific Plan Area Opportunity Units	1,500
SDB Opportunity Units	1,100
Total New Dwelling Units (rounded)	8,000
Commercial	Sq. Ft.
New Commercial	92,000
Loss due to New Housing and Mixed-Use Development	411,000
Net Change	-319,000
Existing	1,491,000
Total After Buildout (rounded)	1,171,000

commercial uses. This net reduction may appear counter to economic development goals, but the intent of the policies outlined in this chapter is to facilitate redevelopment of underutilized properties over time (i.e., properties consisting of low-intensity uses with limited pedestrian engagement) with higher-quality, more flexible commercial spaces integrated into mixed-use buildings, particularly within Designated Nodes. These improvements spill over to other commercial uses and promote overall business viability, supporting a diverse mix of uses and reducing long-term vacancy without compromising an engaging public realm.

A full description of the Specific Plan Buildout is provided in **Appendix C**.



Chapter 4

Economic Development

Adopted – September 29, 2026

San Pablo Avenue has long served as a vital commercial corridor in West Berkeley – home to many small, locally owned businesses, light industrial uses, auto-related uses, service providers, and community institutions that reflect the neighborhood’s cultural and economic diversity. Today, the Specific Plan Area faces both opportunities and challenges; shifting retail dynamics, market conditions, storefront vacancies are transforming the business landscape. An increased focus on adding new development in the area will create new market opportunities.

Throughout the Specific Plan process, the community voiced that San Pablo Avenue should be a lively and inclusive area that represents and serves the people who live nearby and supports new residents as homes are built in the Specific Plan Area. Community members, local business owners, and stakeholders voiced concerns about the risk of commercial displacement, the loss of their historically diverse cultural identities, and the lack of support for existing businesses. For example, business owners are not aware of existing City programs for small business loans, business planning, and other supports. Several mention concerns about lack of parking enforcement having a negative effect on clientele being able to conveniently access their business, and lack of maintenance in the street and with adjacent properties. Participants at community engagement events emphasized the need to retain and grow small businesses, fill empty storefronts with active and relevant uses, and improve San Pablo Avenue's overall appeal and visibility. Many shared a vision of San Pablo Avenue as a culturally vibrant, economically inclusive mixed-use district where it is possible to live, work, and shop locally; and referenced some current and past businesses that reflect their vision for the Specific Plan Area.

"It is our urban center or spine. Be more for the people that live here. [We are] missing boutiques, groceries, and practical things."

– Community Member

An assessment conducted as part of the Specific Plan process indicates about 90 percent of the brick-and-mortar businesses are locally owned. Those establishments continue to provide a diverse mix of commercial activities (see Figure 4.1).

This chapter establishes policies that respond to these concerns and aspirations. It presents strategies to retain and grow local businesses, activate vacant or underutilized spaces, and foster a thriving commercial environment that

reflects the diversity of the Specific Plan Area, and that can serve the growing needs of the community as population increases with the implementation of the Specific Plan. There is a desire to create a commercial and community environment in which residents can satisfy their shopping, service, recreational and social needs within a walkable distance of their home. The policies advance the community's vision for a more vibrant business environment and supportive public realm, including the following objectives:

- Increase business activity by supporting existing businesses and making it easier for new local

businesses to locate and thrive within the Specific Plan Area.

- Support commercial vitality and reduce ground-floor vacancies by encouraging the concentration of new commercial development within Designated Nodes.
- Strengthen connections between public and private spaces by establishing partnerships for indoor and outdoor events and identifying collaborative opportunities to fund and maintain streetscape and public realm improvements.

The topics addressed in this chapter are interrelated. While this chapter is focused on strategies for commercial vitality, many of the Specific Plan's economic goals are also advanced through policies in other chapters – particularly **Chapter 3 Land Use** and **Chapter 5 Streets –**

Transportation and Public Realm. These chapters address how and where ground floor commercial and other business uses are encouraged, how storefronts are designed to engage pedestrians, and how San Pablo Avenue's physical environment supports a vibrant mixed-use district. **Chapter 3 Land Use's** policies, and implementing standards in the Berkeley Municipal Code, shape the distribution of commercial activity by establishing new strategies to focus retail and services at Designated Nodes and allow for flexible uses between Designated Nodes. **Chapter 5 Streets – Transportation and Public Realm's** policies and standards aim to improve multimodal accessibility through bus stop and bicycle improvements, parking management policies, and the pedestrian experience through wider sidewalks, pedestrian-scaled lighting, street trees, and other amenities to make San Pablo Avenue more inviting for customers, residents, and workers.

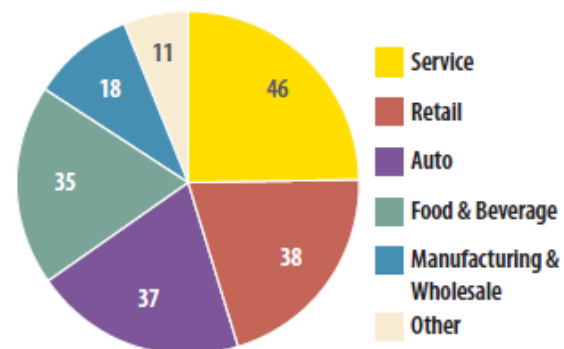


Figure 4.1. Locally-Owned Businesses on San Pablo Avenue.

Data from Financial Department, City of Berkeley. Active Business License Data and SLA. August, 2023.

Together, these policies and programs create a framework to implement the vision of San Pablo Avenue as a mixed-use district that welcomes everyone—residents, workers, artists, entrepreneurs, and visitors—

and enables a diverse, stable, and essential local business community that supports community life.

Relevant Policies in Other Chapters

Chapter 3 - Land Use

- LU-P.2 *Focus Commercial Uses within Designated Nodes*
- LU-P.6 *Planning and Commercial Use Permit Streamlining*
- LU-P.8 *Expand Allowed Primary and Temporary Uses*
- LU-P.9 *Establish Ground Floor Form Types to Promote Pedestrian-Scaled and Flexible Ground Floors*

Chapter 5 - Streets

- PR-P.2 *Sidewalk Incentive*
- PR-P.3 *Improve Street Lighting for the Safety and Comfort of all Users*
- PR-P.12 *Facilitate Wayfinding and Placemaking Programs*
- PR-P.15 *Create Side-Street Plazas*
- PR-P.16 *Support Use and Creation of Parklets*
- PR-P.20 *Privately Owned Public Open Spaces*



Interviews with Business Owners

Marcel Pardo Ariza, the Specific Plan’s Municipal Artist-in-Residence, conducted interviews with business owners along San Pablo Avenue. Here are 2 of those conversations:

Shirley Everett-Dicko, Everett & Jones

Hi, Shirley! I’m so excited to be here at Everett and Jones Barbecue. It’s such an iconic place, especially with all the changes happening in the neighborhood. Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your role here?

Shirley Everett-Dicko: Absolutely! My name is Shirley Everett-Dicko, and I’m one of the original owners of this location, which opened in 1974. My mom, Dorothy Turner, along with my 7 sisters and brother, helped start it. This was our second location—the first was in Oakland.

Can you share a little about your mom’s journey into the barbecue business?

My mom’s story began on seventh Street in West Oakland, once known as the “Harlem of the West.” In the 1960s, she worked at Jenkins Barbecue, run by Reverend Jenkins, our church pastor. Later, she became the first manager at Flint’s Barbecue. With help from Harry Mott, she opened Everett and Jones in 1973.

And how did you all choose the name “Everett and Jones”?

Everett is my dad’s name, and Jones was my sister’s married name. It’s always been a family affair!

Tell us about your famous barbecue sauce.

That’s Mom’s recipe! We started bottling it in 1983 after a customer suggested it, and it’s been a hit ever since.

I’ve heard this place also has ties to the Black Panther movement.

Yes! The East Bay Dragons Motorcycle Club—one of the oldest Black motorcycle clubs in the U.S.—used to provide security for the Black Panther Party. Our first location was next to their clubhouse, so we’ve always shared that community connection.

How have you seen the San Pablo corridor change over the years?

It’s changed a lot. There used to be several barbecue restaurants and plenty of foot traffic from university students. Now there are fewer spots, but we’re still holding our ground!

For someone visiting for the first time, what should they order?

Definitely the ribs and links combo—with potato salad and our homemade sauce. It’s the best way to experience our barbecue.

Anything else you’d like people to know?

Just that Everett and Jones has always been a gathering place. We’re proud to keep our family legacy and community spirit alive.



Figure 4.2. Shirley Everett-Dicko and her family at Everett & Jones
Located at 1955 San Pablo Ave. Photo by Marcel Pardo Ariza, 2023

Jaime Alejo, Mi Ranchito Market

Hi, Jaime! We're here at Mi Ranchito Market. Could you tell us a bit about yourself and your role here?

Jaime Alejo: Of course! I'm Jaime Alejo, the store manager. I've been here for many years and love being part of this family dream that started over 24 years ago. My dad wanted to build something for our family, and now my 4 siblings and I work together to keep it going.

How did it all begin?

It all started with my dad's dream to create a place where the community could feel at home. In the beginning, we were a small store, but over time we've grown. Despite challenges and changes in the neighborhood, we're still here—always dreaming big and providing good service.

How has the community around the market changed?

It's changed a lot. Most of our customers used to be Latino, and now there's a mix of cultures from everywhere. Sadly, many Latinos have had to leave because of the high cost of living. Most of our current customers are students or new residents. Gentrification has really impacted our community.

How have you adapted to these changes?

The key has been to stay flexible and welcoming. We try to keep a family-friendly environment where everyone feels at home. Many customers tell us they find comfort here, and we love helping them discover products that remind them of their homeland.

What kind of products do you offer?

We carry a wide range of Mexican products—fresh foods, household items, meats, and even some Brazilian and Peruvian goods. Our fresh meat section is one of our biggest draws.

What would you say to someone who's never visited Mi Ranchito?

Come anytime! We're open from 8 to 8, and there's always something new to discover. Whether you're looking for a specific ingredient or just want to chat, you'll feel welcome here.

What changes would you like to see in Berkeley to support small businesses?

I hope the City provides more support and subsidies for small businesses. Gentrification has raised costs, making it hard to compete.

Anything else you'd like to add?

Even though times are tough, we're still here thanks to our community's support. Every customer matters, and we hope to keep being a place where everyone feels at home.



Figure 4.3. Jaime Alejo and his brother at Mi Ranchito Bay Side Market
Photo by Marcel Pardo Ariza, 2025

Economic Development Policies and Programs

Small Business Support

Throughout the Specific Plan engagement process, community members expressed the importance of retaining existing businesses and called for greater City support to improve conditions for new small businesses.

A key concern raised by business owners, developers, commercial real estate agents, and the City's Office of Economic Development (OED) staff is the high cost of tenant improvements (TI) required to make existing ground floor retail spaces move-in ready. For both new and existing spaces, the need for infrastructure such as grease ducts, commercial kitchen ventilation systems, and ADA-compliant restrooms poses significant barriers for small business owners, even when lease terms are favorable. In many cases, new commercial spaces enter the market as "cold shell," meaning they lack not only the necessary infrastructure but also basic finishes such as concrete slab floors, wall finishes, or ceilings. While this provides flexibility for tenants to customize their spaces, it also results in higher TI costs and ultimately, higher rents, which often negate the value of any owner-contribution toward buildout.

To address this issue in future development, the *Design Standards Document* includes ground-floor interior standards. In combination with the economic development and land use policies of this Specific Plan, the goal is to reduce TI cost, shorten start-up periods, and help decrease commercial vacancies.



Figure 4.4. Vik's Chaat Parking Lot
In response to the 2020 Pandemic, Vik's Chaat in Berkeley converted its parking lot into a dining area, which remains in use today. Photo from Vik's Chaat, vikschaatcafe.com, accessed April 2025.

ED-P.1 Outdoor Business Activation Toolkit

The Specific Plan expands opportunities for existing businesses to activate outdoor space across private property and adjacent public access easements, and public sidewalks, and plazas. Along major roads in the Specific Plan Area, narrow sidewalks and limited on-site space constrain businesses' ability to provide outdoor seating, merchandise displays, and other amenities to support business and community activity. To overcome these constraints, the Specific Plan seeks to enable businesses to use available space more effectively, strengthening economic vitality and enhancing the pedestrian experience. The following policies and programs function as a flexible toolbox that businesses and the City can apply to expand outdoor activation.

Toolbox:

- **Parking Lot Parklets Program:** *LU-P.8 Expand Allowed Primary and Temporary Uses* introduces a program to allow properties with existing businesses to convert existing off-street parking spaces into Private Parklets for outdoor commercial use. Figure 4.4 shows an example of such conversion in Berkeley.
- **Sidewalk Use:** *PR-S.1 Sidewalk Zone Standards* allows businesses to extend installations, such as merchandise displays, café, or restaurant seating on sidewalk provided they apply and receive an encroachment permit and meet design, access, time of use, and other standards.
- **Parklets on Side-Streets:** *PR-P.16 Support Use and Creation of Parklets* reduces or waves the Outdoor Commerce Use Fee for businesses creating and maintaining parklets that satisfy City standards.

EP-P.2 Support Flexible Commercial Spaces

The Specific Plan's policies will provide flexibility for businesses to utilize existing and new commercial spaces.

An example of this is the Keep Innovation in Berkeley effort undertaken by the Planning and Development Department and OED (see *Supporting Policies and Programs* section at the end of this chapter). This effort permitted more streamlined land use approvals in commercial corridors, in response to the growing innovation sector. West Berkeley has long been a center of production and innovation, and the Specific Plan Area serves as a transition zone between West Berkeley's industrial uses and residential districts east and west of San Pablo Avenue. As demand for mixed-use and residential development along San Pablo Avenue grows, certain industrial uses would no longer be compatible with residential uses due to noise, fumes, or storage needs. However, many other light industrial and related uses can be compatible with residences.



Figure 4.5. Hybrid Makerspace and Coworking Space in West Berkeley

Photo from Filma Collective, filmacollective.org, 2025

Makerspaces:

Bridging the gap, the Specific Plan establishes *Zoning Ordinance* provisions to support **makerspaces** as a form of light manufacturing use, targeting small-scale fabrication and artisan producers that operate solely indoors. Makerspaces can include workspaces, hardware businesses or woodworkers (see example in Figure 4.5), equipped with tools such as laser cutters, 3D printers, and sewing machines, that do not produce significant amounts of noise, vibration, or air pollution.

Co-Working Spaces:

The Specific Plan also ensures that **co-working spaces** would be viable, providing flexibility for businesses to utilize existing and new commercial spaces. Co-working spaces allow for a flexible mix of businesses, making it possible for retail, office, galleries and art studios - owned by different businesses or independent professionals - to collaborate and define their workspace based on their individual needs. Typical businesses that would operate in a co-working space are allowed with a Zoning Certificate, streamlining the land use review process and allowing the mix of specific uses to be flexible in response to changing needs and market conditions (See example in Figure 4.6).

For details, see *LU-P.8 Expand the List of Allowed Uses and Allowed Temporary Uses*.

ED-P.3 Establish Public-Private Partnerships to Activate the Specific Plan Area

The Specific Plan encourages the creation of partnerships between the City and community organizations, local institutions, merchant groups, property owners, and other stakeholders to create vibrant, welcoming spaces and culturally relevant, artistic, and family-friendly activities.

Strategies:

- Promotion of new businesses and events in the Specific Plan Area, including developing a robust calendar of happenings that draw people from surrounding neighborhoods and the region.
- Pop-up activations in vacant storefronts.
- Transformation of underused parking lots into spaces for food trucks, outdoor markets, or community gatherings.

- Side-street closures for block parties, neighborhood festivals, events sponsored by adjacent businesses, and seasonal celebrations.
- Assistance with permitting and other logistics to support organizations in implementing activities and events.

Nurturing partnerships with existing and new associations and neighborhood groups will strengthen the identity of the Specific Plan Area as a lively and inclusive commercial district. City partnerships with businesses can demonstrate the potential role a business improvement district (BID) could play in the Specific Plan Area.

Programs

Example partners and initiatives include:

- Partnering with existing organizations such as the West Berkeley Design Loop, or the International and the University Avenue Association. These organizations already coordinate events and business promotion in the Specific Plan Area; see also *ED-P.4 Support and Expand Existing Business Clusters*. The City should strengthen and expand these efforts by supporting their capacity to organize Specific Plan Area-wide initiatives, co-advertise, and partner with businesses.
- To support event planning, the City should clearly communicate how permit processes work, provide technical assistance to organizers, and help facilitate applications with the appropriate departments for activities such as encroachment permits, temporary street closures, or outdoor vendor activations. The City should also leverage networks such as the Berkeley Business District Network (BBDN) to connect associations and event organizers with City staff and resources. These meetings are critical opportunities to share information on local trends and conditions affecting small businesses, district events, policy issues, and other relevant topics.



Figure 4.6. Example of a Co-Working Space for Personal Services

At 1518 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, a large commercial space was subdivided into smaller suites and then rented out to small businesses. Photo by CD+A.

Business Organizations

There are two main ways that business organizations can define and organize themselves in the Specific Plan Area. First, they can be geographically defined, such as the Berkeley International Marketplace (Figure 4.7) focused to San Pablo Avenue and University Avenue. Others, like the West Berkeley Design loop, are more strongly defined by business type and the market they serve. Given the diversity of businesses within the Specific Plan Area, it is likely that both types of business organizations will continue to exist. Those with a more focused geography have the potential to become a business improvement district (BID) and potentially grow into a larger BID covering the entire Specific Plan Area. Those that serve a business type or market sector have the potential to coexist with a BID. These two types of business organizations can define roles that are mutually supportive.



Figure 4.7. Berkeley International Marketplace Participating Businesses
Photo from Berkeley International Marketplace, binmar.org, 2025

ED-P.4 Support and Expand Existing Business Clusters

The Specific Plan supports capacity-building of existing business “cluster” organizations and the formation of new organizations. These organizations promote and organize businesses in the Specific Plan Area and adjacent areas, with the goal of enhancing local identity, improving business coordination, and laying groundwork for future collective action. These organizations, such as merchant associations, property-owner groups, and promotional collaboratives should be flexible in their geographic scope and business membership, modeled after existing efforts like the West Berkeley Design Loop and the Berkeley International Marketplace.

The intent is to facilitate coordination among businesses based on geographic location (Specific Plan Area-wide, within specific Designated Nodes, and connections with related businesses in adjacent areas), business type, or ownership structure, in order to enhance visibility, branding, and mutual support. Implementation of this policy further supports inclusive and flexible organizational models that reflect the Specific Plan Area’s diverse mix of retail, service, light industrial, and cultural uses, extending beyond traditional business improvement districts (BIDs).

City Support and Technical Assistance

The Office of Economic Development (OED) will take the lead to coordinate with other City departments and existing business organizations in these efforts:

Marketing

- Continue to provide access to City branding and marketing tools (e.g., #DiscoveredinBerkeley local marketing campaign, and connections to the City’s Convention and Visitors Bureau known as visitberkeley).

Berkeley International Marketplace

In 2006, local business owners, in partnership with the City’s Office of Economic Development, established the “[Berkeley International Marketplace](http://BerkeleyInternationalMarketplace)” to celebrate the cultural diversity of businesses near the San Pablo Avenue and University Avenue intersection. While the initiative faded over time, remnants of its identity remain visible through banners on light poles, and many existing businesses continue to reflect the area’s international character. In 2025, local businesses began working together to revitalize the neighborhood designation¹, expanding outreach and featuring more businesses along both San Pablo Avenue and University Avenue on their website.

¹Nathan Dalton. “Is This West Berkeley Intersection About to Be Revived?” *Berkeleyside*, May 14, 2025.

- Provide information to business organizations to help them design and install signs, banners, or similar elements to define business cluster locations or the location of member businesses that are more dispersed in the Specific Plan Area and in adjacent areas, see *PR-P.12 Facilitate Wayfinding and Placemaking Programs*.
- Continue to provide strategic support to business cluster organizations, such as the West Berkeley Design Loop group, as they expand their membership and expand activities such as marketing, branding and events.

Engagement

- Identify opportunities to inform new businesses located in the Specific Plan Area about the small business support the OED currently provides on a citywide basis.
- Work with existing and new business organizations to designate commercial districts within the Specific Plan Area, enabling their recognition on the [OED website](#). This effort can also support the start of a BID or BIDs in the Specific Plan Area.
- Continue to use the Berkeley Business District Network (BBDN) meetings and the City's small business forum as platforms to connect Specific Plan Area businesses with business groups elsewhere in with Berkeley, and with the City Manager, other City staff and resources.

Related policies:

- Ensure coordination with implementation of *ED-P.5 Study Feasibility of Forming a Business Improvement District (BID) or Community Benefit District (CBD)*, *ED-P.6 Economic Development Technical Assistance*, and Policy *ED-P.7 Establish a Process to Prioritize Public Investment on Improvements in Designated Nodes* to ensure improvements are aligned with cluster organization initiatives.

Business Improvement and Community Benefit District(s)

The community expressed frustration with the lack of comfort and poor maintenance of existing public spaces along San Pablo Avenue. Property and business owners in the Specific Plan Area and West Berkeley have shown interest in working together to enhance the business and community environment in the Specific Plan Area. Members of the West Berkeley Design Loop and others in the business community have also indicated interest in forming a business improvement district (BID) to expand on business support efforts such as co-marketing, event programming, and enhanced maintenance and safety, similar to those of the Downtown Berkeley Association. A business improvement district (BID) or community benefit district (CBD) can take on a key role in addressing these community concerns through sidewalk maintenance and streetscape beautification, security, business attraction and retention, and community outreach.



What is a Business Improvement District (BID)?

A BID is an independent non-profit organization funded primarily through property-owners and/or business owners within a defined geographic area who agree to assess (or tax) themselves to support specific improvements and/or services beyond those typically provided by the City. A BID provides a dedicated management structure, with a governing board, annual work plan, and budget, ensuring accountability and transparency. This structure gives local businesses a unified voice and increases capacity to collaborate with the City and other community organizations. Existing BIDs in Berkeley include Downtown Berkeley, Telegraph, North Shattuck, Solano, and Elmwood.

What is a Community Benefit District (CBD)?

A CBD is a public-private partnership between the City and local communities within a defined geographic area, with a funding structure similar to a BID. CBDs typically include commercial, mixed-use, and residential property owners and businesses. Unlike BIDs, CBDs offer a broader scope by engaging the community to preserve and celebrate the area's identity. Existing CBDs in Oakland include the Downtown Oakland Association and the Black Cultural Zone (BCZ).

ED-P.5 Study Feasibility of Forming a Business Improvement District (BID) or Community Benefit District (CBD)

The Specific Plan supports collaboration between the City and local businesses and property owners to study the feasibility and scope of establishing one or more BIDs or CBDs within the Specific Plan Area. The study should assess potential boundary options ranging from Specific Plan Area-wide to targeted areas around Designated Nodes and may also explore extensions into adjacent areas of West Berkeley where commercial synergies and business interest are strongest.

Study Objectives:

- 1) Analyze the feasibility of different boundaries and implementation approaches. Options to consider include:
 - Establishing a pilot BID focused on 1 or 2 high-potential Designated Nodes (such as Cedar Street and/or University Avenue). A high potential Designated Node is a place where public investments and community business interest are already concentrated, long-term businesses

with pedestrian-oriented storefronts are clustered, and planned or completed mixed-use developments are increasing residential density.

- Exploring hybrid models that begin with merchant associations or business clusters and evolve toward more formal entities.
 - Examining the possibility of organizing a BID that extends outside the Specific Plan Area or a thematic district that includes parts of West Berkeley, such as the West Berkeley Design Loop or includes a portion of the Specific Plan Area in the discussion of a Gilman District BID.
- 2) Include an equity-centered outreach process that engages with a broad range of groups active in the Specific Plan Area, such as existing businesses and property owners, Black-owned businesses and cultural institutions, community-based organizations, nonprofits, arts groups, and unhoused residents who engage with the Specific Plan Area’s public realm. The City should partner with CBOs and business networks to facilitate this outreach (see *ED-P.3 Establish Public-Private Partnerships to Activate the Specific Plan Area*). The study should also define equity principles and guiding principles to guide the creation and operation of any future entity, ensuring alignment with community goals.

This effort should be coordinated with existing or proposed district initiatives in nearby areas and explore opportunities for shared services or partnerships. Lessons from other Berkeley BIDs and national models—particularly those with cultural district components—should inform the structure, governance, and service priorities of a potential San Pablo Avenue District.

ED-P.6 Economic Development Technical Assistance

To facilitate the implementation of the policies in this chapter, OED staff will provide technical assistance in the following areas:

- Implementation of Public-Private Partnerships in alignment with *ED-P.3 Establish Public-Private Partnerships to Activate the Specific Plan Area*.
- Implementation of *ED-P.5 Study Feasibility of Forming a Business Improvement District (BID) or Community Benefit District (CBD)* to initiate the study.
 - Conduct outreach and engagement, with businesses and property owners within the Specific Plan Area to assess interest in forming business cluster organizations, a BID, or a CBD.
 - Provide technical assistance in navigating legal and financial requirements related to BID or CBD formation.
 - Work with the businesses, cultural institutions and artist groups in the community to identify potential commercial and cultural districts along San Pablo Avenue, such as a maker/light industrial district, international district, or State-designated cultural district. Report on the feasibility of integrating commercial and cultural districts into marketing efforts and BID/CBD feasibility study.
- Facilitate discussions among businesses and property owners.
- Coordinate early marketing and/or events to build momentum and community identity.

Public Investment

ED-P.7 Establish a Process to Prioritize Public Investment in Designated Nodes

The Specific Plan seeks to concentrate resources within Designated Nodes for the purpose of delivering visible, coordinated improvements that can attract new businesses, enhance safety, and build community identity. By targeting grant and capital funding to these locations, ongoing transportation projects can be leveraged and aligned with public and private investments.

A process and criteria shall be established to prioritize public investments in Designated Nodes that strengthen safety, catalyze economic development and build momentum for the Specific Plan Area. The following metrics should be incorporated - number of existing businesses, number of residential units, number of commercial vacancies - and outreach should be conducted in an equitable manner. Initial public investment – such as pedestrian-scale lighting, transit-supportive infrastructure, and amenities for gathering – should be made within the highest priority Designated Node(s).

Supporting Policies and Programs

The policies within this Specific Plan, including those in **Chapter 3 Land Use** and **Chapter 5 Streets – Transportation and Public Realm**, are designed to work together to strengthen the Specific Plan Area as a whole, including the local economy along San Pablo Avenue.

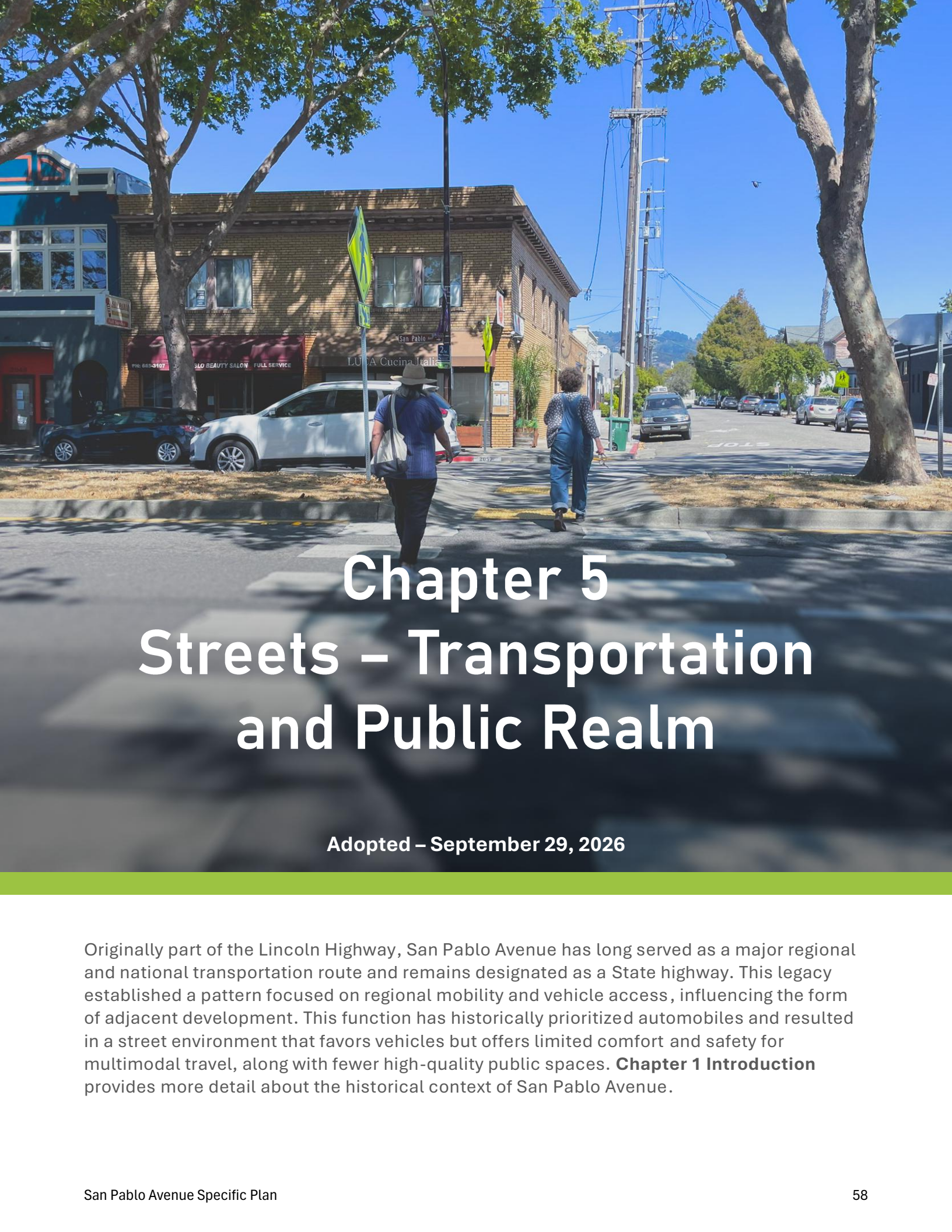
Land Use policies that increase housing capacity will bring more residents within walking distance of local businesses, thereby expanding the customer base and supporting neighborhood-serving retail and services. Concentrating activity in Designated Nodes and promoting a broader mix of uses will enhance the vitality of these areas, helping them evolve into distinct commercial destinations. Building design standards require either storefront or active ground floor frontage within Designated Nodes, allowing the extent of retail and restaurant uses to adapt over time as the population in the Specific Plan Area grows (See *LU-P.9 Establish Ground Floor Form Types to Promote Pedestrian-Scaled and Flexible Ground Floors*).

Transportation policies are designed to make San Pablo Avenue more attractive, accessible and comfortable for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders. Enhancing multimodal connections both within Berkeley and to the broader East Bay region will increase foot traffic, improve accessibility for surrounding neighborhoods, and expand regional connectivity to the Specific Plan Area. These improvements will draw more potential customers and support the diverse mix of local and specialized businesses along San Pablo Avenue (**Chapter 5 Streets – Transportation and Public Realm**).

Public realm policies and standards to create consistent lighting and street furnishings, street trees, and public realm expansions, will improve comfort and encourage longer, more frequent visits that support commercial activity (**Chapter 5 Streets – Transportation and Public Realm**).

Together, these measures are designed to enhance the livability of the Specific Plan Area while driving long-term economic growth.

In addition, the City's [Revolving Loan Fund](#) program can provide access to capital for businesses and entrepreneurs who seek to grow and retain jobs, but do not qualify for a traditional bank loan. The loan can be used to fund business expansion, fixed assets, equipment, working capital, and real estate.



Chapter 5

Streets – Transportation and Public Realm

Adopted – September 29, 2026

Originally part of the Lincoln Highway, San Pablo Avenue has long served as a major regional and national transportation route and remains designated as a State highway. This legacy established a pattern focused on regional mobility and vehicle access, influencing the form of adjacent development. This function has historically prioritized automobiles and resulted in a street environment that favors vehicles but offers limited comfort and safety for multimodal travel, along with fewer high-quality public spaces. **Chapter 1 Introduction** provides more detail about the historical context of San Pablo Avenue.

Some stretches along San Pablo Avenue feature a consistent tree canopy and active storefronts that introduce a pedestrian-friendly setting, but these remain exceptions. New developments and streetscape improvements are gradually transforming San Pablo Avenue into a multimodal corridor. These ongoing efforts aim to enhance comfort, safety, and accessibility for people walking, biking, and using transit, while creating a more attractive and functional public realm that reflects the changing needs of the street.

Community feedback gathered through the outreach process reinforces this shift in priorities. Participants expressed strong support for improving the pedestrian, bicycle, and transit environment along and across San Pablo Avenue. Survey responses identified walking as the second most common mode of travel to and from destinations along San Pablo Avenue. At the first

community open house, focus group meetings, and other engagement events, community members emphasized the need for safe streets and streetscape improvements. Many also voiced concerns about existing traffic speeds and noise, highlighting the ongoing tension between vehicular centered conditions and the community's vision of a vibrant mixed-use place where people live, work, shop, and socialize.

This chapter defines policies, programs and standards that aim to balance the transportation, land use, and public realm functions of San Pablo Avenue and the evolving mixed-use district along it. The focus is to transform San Pablo Avenue into a multimodal street that not only facilitates safe and efficient travel for all users but also enhances the availability and quality of public space.



Existing Conditions

This section provides an overview of existing transportation conditions, including transit access, and multimodal mobility, safety and comfort and summarizes existing public realm conditions. A detailed assessment is available in **Appendix A: Key Existing Conditions**.

Public Realm

The public realm experience varies along San Pablo Avenue –some areas support street life, while others feel inactive at the pedestrian scale. There are engaging places with a combination of active street life and vibrant businesses, such as the blocks south of University Avenue and Dwight Way (see Figure 5.2). At these locations, one can find outdoor seating, decorative plantings and other amenities that invite potential customers and create a comfortable environment for people walking along the street. On stretches where business activity is slow, sidewalks are more likely to be in poor condition, landscaping is less likely to be maintained, and the street edge is framed by vacant or vandalized building frontages, or tall fencing. These segments experience less foot traffic and fewer parked cars, as the public realm offers little reason for people to linger as they pass through.

San Pablo Avenue is also physically wide, with a typical right-of-way measuring 73 feet from curb to curb (see Figure 5.1). This includes four travel lanes (two in each direction), street parking, and a landscaped median. There are no designated bicycle facilities or markings along San Pablo Avenue, so cyclists ride in the roadway, on the sidewalk, or more commonly, use nearby streets which include parallel bicycle routes. While this configuration supports vehicle traffic movement and access, it creates a sense of separation between the two sides of the street and confines pedestrian space to the standard 13-foot sidewalks on either side. Sidewalks are narrow compared to the preferred width guidance set in the 2020 Pedestrian Plan¹ and offer limited protection from adjacent vehicle traffic. During community engagement activities, participants frequently expressed concern about narrowness, their exposure to vehicle traffic, and associated noise levels.



Figure 5.1 Section Graphic of the Typical Right-of-Way Configuration at San Pablo Avenue
Graphic by CD+A

¹ City of Berkeley. [Pedestrian Plan Appendix B: Toolbox of Pedestrian Improvements](#). Adopted 2020, p. 8

Transportation

Multimodal Mobility, Safety and Comfort

According to the Vision Zero Policy and Plan (see page 58) San Pablo Avenue is classified as a High-Injury Street, one of the City's streets with the highest number of severe injury and fatality traffic crashes. Risk and discomfort associated with crossing the street is driven by the absence of dedicated bicycle crossing infrastructure, limited pedestrian visibility, and high vehicle speeds and related traffic noise. These conditions create an environment that is less safe for non-motorized users.

As mentioned previously, many cyclists avoid riding directly on San Pablo Avenue and instead rely on parallel bicycle routes. However, crossing San Pablo Avenue remains difficult. The 2017 Berkeley Bicycle Plan (see page 58) identified all intersections at key east-west bicycle routes designated as class III bicycle boulevards—specifically Virginia Street, Channing Way, and the Russell Street and Heinz Avenue connection—as

high-stress locations for cyclists and present significant barriers to safe and comfortable bicycle travel.

Several safety improvement projects are underway to address some of these conditions. For project details, see **Appendix D: Street Improvements**. The Specific Plan (the Plan) establishes policies and standards for further improving mobility, safety, and comfort for all users. **Appendix D** also outlines recommended projects that may be implemented with future development.

Transit Network

Transit service within the Specific Plan Area is provided by the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit), which operates local bus routes, a limited stop bus line along San Pablo Avenue, and transbay service connecting the area to the Salesforce Transit Center in San Francisco. AC Transit routes 72, 72L, 72M, 52, 51B, 36, 12, J, G, FS, and San Pablo All Nighters (800 & 802) connect the Specific Plan Area to North Berkeley, Downtown Berkeley, or Ashby BART Stations, and San Francisco.



Figure 5.2 Sidewalk with Bus Stop and Café Seating

On the West Side of San Pablo Avenue and Dwight Way Intersection. Photo by CD+A, 2025

Objectives

San Pablo Avenue does not need to look the same from end to end; in fact, the distinct character of different places along San Pablo Avenue is one of its valued assets (See Figures 5.3 and 5.4). However, many of these areas can benefit from stronger visual and physical connections. By establishing guidance for shared elements like trees, lighting, and street furnishings, the Plan seeks to create a sense of continuity while allowing for places along San Pablo Avenue to develop their own unique identity.



Transportation

Improve San Pablo Avenue’s function as a multimodal street that safely and efficiently serves pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, drivers, deliveries, freight, emergency response and evacuation, and maintenance access. Enhance access to transit and reduce collisions. Improve the balance between regional mobility and local access. Better manage on-street parking and loading to support diverse uses along San Pablo Avenue.



Figure 5.3 Daytime Traffic
San Pablo Avenue near Blake Street Intersection.
Photo by CD+A, 2025



Public Realm

Transform San Pablo Avenue into a welcoming and vibrant public realm, with public spaces that enhance the distinct character of places along the street and neighborhoods they connect to. Expand and improve sidewalks and streetscape elements and encourage public art, and cultural activities to support a more active street life.



Figure 5.4 Sidewalk with Storefront
San Pablo Avenue Sidewalk South of Dwight Way.
Photo by CD+A, 2025

Transportation Policies, Standards and Projects

The Specific Plan Area needs improved local and citywide multimodal access to support anticipated growth in population, employment, and business activity in the Specific Plan Area and adjacent neighborhoods in West and South Berkeley. Meeting the transportation needs of this growth will require reducing dependence on personal vehicles and expanding access to safer and more equitable travel options. This approach aligns with regional and City goals for climate action, economic vitality and equity. The following section outlines strategies to support this transition, including safer street crossings for all users, enhanced transit access and reliability, parking and curb management to support businesses, and measures to reduce collisions while improving overall mobility.

Existing Policies and Standards

City of Berkeley

Vision Zero Policy and Plan

In 2020, the City of Berkeley adopted its **Vision Zero Action Plan** with the goal to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries by 2028. The plan focuses on engineering and design strategies that improve safety for everyone travelling in Berkeley. Between 2011 and 2020, multiple collisions along San Pablo Avenue resulted in severe injuries to people walking, biking, and driving, including one fatality. According to the City's 2022 Annual Report², 42 percent of Berkeley's severe and fatal traffic collisions during that same timeframe occurred within Metropolitan Transportation Commission designated Equity Priority Communities³, which includes most of the Specific Plan Area.

To help meet Vision Zero goals, several safety improvements are already planned or in progress, and many are part of Alameda CTC's San Pablo Corridor Safety Enhancements Project. The Specific Plan also includes transportation safety related policies, improvements, and an implementation strategy that supports Vision Zero goals.

Berkeley Bicycle Plan

The City of Berkeley Bicycle Plan Update was adopted by City Council on June 16, 2026. The update began with Phase 1 public outreach in 2022 and drafting of the plan with additional engagement in 2025. Parallel

development with the Specific Plan allowed for coordination between both documents. The following information is drawn from the Final Draft of the Bike Plan, dated January 2026 which was adopted as the Final Plan. The Bicycle Plan seeks to increase bicycle use as a day-to-day mode of transportation. San Pablo Avenue, as one of the City's and AC Transit's Primary Transit Routes, was identified for further study to evaluate options for improved Class IV bicycle access along the street. San Pablo Avenue is designated as a Tier 2 Priority Project in the Bicycle Plan based on the project's scoring for safety, community support, equity, Safe Routes to Schools, and project feasibility. As part of the Bike Plan's Complete Streets Corridor Study Recommendations⁴, it recognizes the earlier multimodal study completed by Alameda CTC and states "*Further study and design of parallel residential street bikeways, ped and bike crossing improvements, and transit service improvements in progress.*"⁵

Since the adoption of the initial 2017 Bicycle Plan, the City has partnered with Alameda CTC through its San Pablo Avenue Safety Enhancements Project and Parallel Bike Improvements Project to implement crossing upgrades at several designated bicycle boulevards and to establish new and improve existing parallel bicycle boulevard routes. Additional information about planned safety and mobility improvements along San Pablo Avenue is provided in the following section, which discusses the Alameda CTC San Pablo Corridor Projects.

² City of Berkeley. [Vision Zero Annual Report 2021–2022](#). June 2022. Accessed 6 May 2025.

³ See Chapter 1 Introduction for definition of Equity Priority Communities.

⁴ City of Berkeley Bicycle Plan update, [Final Draft](#), January 2026. Accessed 20 May 2026. Pp. 124-126

⁵ City of Berkeley Bicycle Plan update, pp. 126

Berkeley Pedestrian Plan

The **2020 Pedestrian Plan**⁶ outlines strategies to improve pedestrian travel along Berkeley’s high-injury streets and enhance overall pedestrian safety consistent with the Vision Zero Action Plan. The plan identifies San Pablo Avenue—from University Avenue to Dwight Way—as a priority corridor, ranking it among the top 10 locations for capital projects focused on pedestrian safety.

The Plan’s proposed improvements at key intersections along San Pablo Avenue align closely with the Alameda CTC San Pablo Avenue Safety Enhancements Project and include curb extensions, raised medians, high-visibility crosswalk markings, and pedestrian hybrid beacons (PHBs)/rapid-reflective flashing beacons (RRFBs).

Additional recommendations go beyond the current scope of the Safety Enhancements Project. These include evaluating the feasibility of lowering speed limits to 25 mph and introducing separate pedestrian signal phases that do not conflict with turning vehicles.

Transportation Demand Management Policies

The City of Berkeley Municipal Code establishes a **Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program**⁷ that supports the goals of the City’s Transportation Element and Climate Action Plan by reducing automobile travel, encouraging transit ridership, and promoting bicycle and pedestrian safety. This program requires new residential developments of ten or more units to:

- Provide unbundled parking that is sold or leased separately from units to incentivize reduced automobile ownership
- Offer monthly transit passes at no cost to residents to encourage transit use
- Provide real-time transportation information on displays in common areas to facilitate transit use

Before a Certificate of Occupancy is issued, site inspection is required to confirm that all required physical improvements have been installed. Following occupancy, property owners are responsible for

ongoing compliance and reporting to ensure that required TDM measures remain in place and effectively achieve the objectives of the program.

Additionally, the City requires employers with ten or more employees to provide a **Commuter Benefit Program**⁸ that encourages the use of transit, vanpools, or bicycles by providing pre-tax payroll deductions, direct payment of expenses, or a company-funded shuttle service.

goBerkeley On-Street Parking Meter Policy

In 2022, the City of Berkeley launched the goBerkeley SmartSpace pilot, funded by MTC and FHWA, to explore ways to reduce the need for residents to move their vehicles every two hours due to on-street parking restrictions in neighborhoods near the Elmwood and Southside/Telegraph commercial districts. As a result of the pilot, the City adopted an **on-street parking meter pricing policy**⁹ for single-space meters and pay stations within the goBerkeley meter zones that allows for parking fee adjustments based on published parking occupancy data. The goal is to maintain 65–85% occupancy, or roughly 1–2 open spaces per block, to minimize circling and improve parking availability. Rates are adjusted two to three times per year.

On-Street Accessible Parking and Passenger Loading Requirements

Accessible parking in the public right-of-way is required and must comply with the U.S. Access Board’s **Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)**, federally adopted in 2024.¹⁰ Where on-street parking is metered or designated by signage or pavement markings, the required number of accessible spaces and their design must follow PROWAG standards for dimensions, clearances, and connection to the pedestrian access route. If individual spaces are not marked, each 20 feet of designated curb space is counted as one parking space.

The following exceptions apply to implementation of on-street accessible parking:

⁶ City of Berkeley. [Berkeley 2020 Pedestrian Plan](#). 2020. Accessed 17 June 2025.

⁷ City of Berkeley. [Berkeley Municipal Code § 23.334 - Transportation Demand Management](#). Accessed 16 June 2025.

⁸ City of Berkeley. [Berkeley Municipal Code § 9.88 – Commuter Benefit Program](#). Accessed 2 July 2025.

⁹ City of Berkeley. [Berkeley Municipal Code § 14.52.120 – Parking Meter and Pay Station Fees](#). Accessed 23 June 2025.

¹⁰ U.S. Access Board. [Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines \(PROWAG\), 36 CFR Part 1190, Final Rule published in the Federal Register, 88 FR 54336](#). August 2023. Effective 7 September 2024. Accessed 23 June 2025.

- Spaces reserved exclusively for residential, commercial, or law enforcement use are exempt and not counted toward required totals.
- If on-street spaces are altered, requirements apply only to the modified spaces until the minimum required number is reached.

Accessible passenger loading zones in the public right-of-way are also required. At least one accessible loading zone must be provided per 100 feet (or fraction thereof) of designated loading area, excluding transit stops.

Off-Street Parking Maximums in Transit-Rich Areas

In 2021, the City of Berkeley adopted parking reforms that established **off-street parking maximums** for new residential developments well-served by transit, limiting vehicle parking to a maximum of 0.5 spaces per dwelling unit.¹¹ Parking reductions are also defined for all uses in mixed-use buildings within the existing C-W zoning district.¹² This policy is intended to support TDM measures by discouraging car dependency and encouraging transit-oriented, sustainable growth in areas with good transit service. The cap applies within a quarter mile of rail stations and bus transit corridors with peak period frequency of 15 minutes or better, which includes the entirety of the Specific Plan Area.

Bicycle Parking Policies

Bicycle parking facilities that are secure, accessible, and weather-protected support TDM measures by encouraging bicycle use. Bicycle parking is also included in the *Pre-Occupancy TDM Program and Bicycle Parking Ongoing Monitoring and Reporting Statement*, which new developments are required to complete.

Building on the goals of the 2017 Berkeley Bicycle Plan, the City of Berkeley Municipal Code requires **long- and short-term bicycle parking** for new commercial construction, development that expands floor area, and new residential projects, including residential portions of mixed-use developments.¹³ Bicycle parking spaces are required on a per square-

foot basis for commercial development and per bedroom basis for residential development.

Detailed siting and design standards for bicycle parking are outlined in the **Bicycle Facility Design Toolbox**, provided as Appendix F of the 2017 Bicycle Plan.¹⁴ This guidance accounts for a range of bicycle types and sizes and recommends long-term parking strategies based on lot coverage. Projects on parcels with high lot coverage (over 85%) are encouraged to provide indoor long-term bike parking, such as a secure room or cage. Sites with lower lot coverage may use outdoor solutions like bike lockers or covered, secure enclosures.

Bike corrals are a form of on-street bicycle parking that provide high-capacity, short-term parking by consolidating racks within the paved right-of-way, typically in areas with high demand and limited sidewalk space. In Berkeley, corrals may replace a vehicle parking space or be installed adjacent to a red curb. Merchants or property owners may request a bike corral in front of their business.¹⁵ Requests are reviewed based on safety, demand, and feasibility, and installations must follow design standards outlined in the City's Bicycle Facility Design Toolbox. The City may also create bike corrals in locations with high bike parking demand and limited sidewalk space, such as in multimodal Mobility Hubs.

Transit-First Policy Implementation Plan

The **Transit-First Policy Implementation Plan (2023)** provides policies and guidelines for implementing the City's Transit-First Policy (Berkeley General Plan Policy T-4) and for future planning for the City's existing transit priority corridors. It is a standalone document but planned to be implemented into a future update of the Berkeley Strategic Transportation (BeST) Plan.

The Plan designates San Pablo Avenue as a Primary Transit Route and a priority corridor for further study of transit infrastructure needs, building on the findings of AC Transit's Major Corridors Study (2016). Together with Telegraph and University Avenues, San Pablo Avenue is identified as a potential Bus Rapid Transit corridor in AC Transit's Long-Term Improvements Plan (targeted for implementation by 2040). Further, the

¹¹ City of Berkeley. [Berkeley Municipal Code § 23.322.070 – Off-Street Parking Maximums for Residential Development](#). Accessed 16 June 2025.

¹² City of Berkeley. [Berkeley Municipal Code § 23.322.050.A.7 – All Uses in Mixed-Use Building](#). Accessed 11 March 2025.

¹³ City of Berkeley. [Berkeley Municipal Code § 23.322.090 – Bicycle Parking](#). Accessed 2 July 2025.

¹⁴ City of Berkeley. [Berkeley Bicycle Facility Design Toolbox](#). May 2017. Accessed 16 June 2025.

¹⁵ City of Berkeley. [Bicycle Parking Program](#). 2025. Accessed 26 June 2025.

Plan highlights Alameda CTC's San Pablo Corridor Project as the lead effort for shaping future transit improvements and recommends ongoing coordination with Alameda CTC, Caltrans, and neighboring cities to develop a long-term implementation strategy.

Council Referral for BRT in Berkeley

In September 2023, the Berkeley City Council directed the City Manager to explore a feasibility analysis of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) options along AC Transit's 51B route, including University Avenue. University Avenue bus service provides a key east-west connection between San Pablo Avenue and Downtown Berkeley and is designated a Primary Transit Route in AC Transit's Major Corridors Study.

Future BRT service on University Avenue could enhance transit access between the Specific Plan Area and major destinations such as Downtown Berkeley, UC Berkeley, BART, and the Berkeley Amtrak Capitol Corridor Station. Completed improvements in

the Southside area include bus-only lanes on Durant Avenue and Bancroft Way that are used by the 51B and 6 routes. The referral proposes future budget allocations for corridor studies and ADA improvements.

San Pablo Avenue Public Improvement Plan

The San Pablo Avenue Public Improvements Plan, adopted on December 7, 2004, was developed to support pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, and transit users, while also revitalizing the area along and surrounding San Pablo Avenue. While many improvements have been completed, the Plan itself is now outdated and replaced by this Specific Plan. The Improvement Plan's recommendations served as a foundation for the Specific Plan's public realm framework, informing its policies, programs and design standards.

Caltrans

As described in **Chapter 1 Introduction**, San Pablo Avenue is a California state highway (State Route 123). Any improvements within the street right-of-way must be approved by Caltrans, while the City of Berkeley is responsible for maintaining sidewalks, roadway surface and medians, street trees, landscaping, and electrical work. Any modifications to the roadway itself, such as lane configurations, signal equipment and timing, speed

limits, curb changes, or median design, must comply with Caltrans design standards and receive their approval.

Because San Pablo Avenue functions as a freeway reliever route for I-80, it is prioritized for regional vehicle movement. This limits the feasibility of changes that could reduce vehicular capacity.

AC Transit

AC Transit provides bus service across Alameda and Contra Costa counties, operating 12 routes that serve the Study Area and connect directly to San Pablo Avenue.

Realign Plan

In response to evolving travel patterns, AC Transit developed the Realign Plan, a redesigned bus network, which launched in August 2025. Under the new network, bus service frequency along San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley is expected to remain the same consistent with previous levels, while overall schedule reliability is anticipated to improve.

AC Transit first introduced the RAPID bus, Line 72R, service in 2003, a service that continues under 72L today. The agency further upgraded transit efficiency with the

San Pablo Avenue Rapid Corridors Project, completed in 2023. This effort improved traffic signals, installed GPS-enabled Transit Signal Priority (TSP) technology, and enhanced overall operations from downtown Oakland to the City of San Pablo.

Major Corridors Study

AC Transit's 2016 Major Corridors Study laid out both short- and long-term strategies for improving service along San Pablo Avenue. The long-term vision calls for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to boost capacity and reliability. In the short- and mid-terms, the Rapid Corridors project and on-going planning and design led by Alameda CTC are improving transit infrastructure along San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley and adjacent communities. For more details on their current work, see **Appendix D**.

Existing Transportation Projects

At the time of writing the Plan, several transportation and streetscape improvements are anticipated to take place over the next several years. The improvements proposed in the Plan build upon these ongoing and planned efforts, treating them as baseline conditions. For a comprehensive list and description of these projects, refer to **Appendix D**.

City of Berkeley Projects

The City moved forward with the implementation of several projects identified in the 2017 Bike Plan and 2020 Pedestrian Plan, including several projects that cross or parallel San Pablo Avenue. These efforts were

coordinated with Alameda CTC's San Pablo Avenue Corridor Projects to support broader multimodal safety goals. For a map of current connections and a full list of projects, see **Appendix D** and see Figure 5.8.

Alameda CTC Projects

The Plan does not focus on transportation improvements to San Pablo Avenue, because the Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC) has completed a multimodal planning study for San Pablo Avenue throughout Alameda County. The study led to three improvement projects (see Figure 5.5). These projects will result in construction of safety improvements for all users, bus stop improvements, and parallel bicycle facility improvements, as well as a short segment of bicycle and bus lanes on the southern end of San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley. For detailed project descriptions and timelines, refer to **Appendix D**. The Bus Lanes and Bike Lanes project which is planned to extend

from Oakland to the south up to Heinz Street in Berkeley has experienced some planning delays and is not expected to be finished with construction by 2035 at the earliest. The Parallel Bike Improvements and Safety Enhancement projects are expected to be completed by 2027 to 2028.

Alameda Countywide Bikeways Network

San Pablo Avenue is designated as a major bus and bikeway corridor within the Alameda Countywide Bikeways Network¹⁶; it is subject to regional All Ages and Abilities (AAA) bikeway design expectations. For additional details, see **Appendix D**.

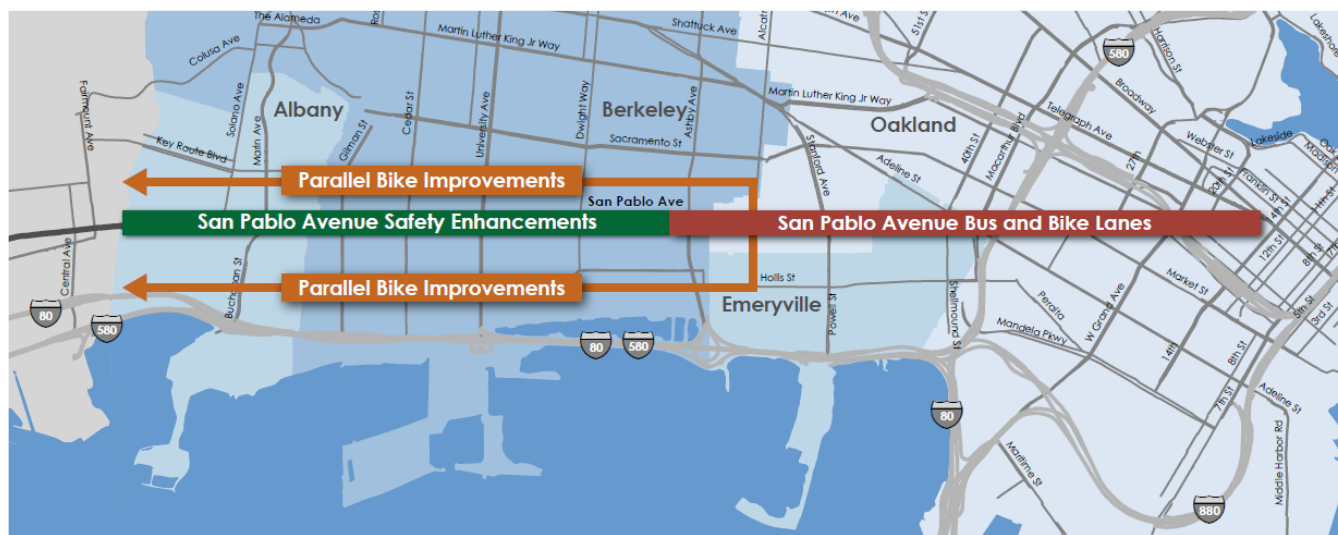


Figure 5.5 Alameda CTC San Pablo Avenue Multimodal Corridor Overview Map

Map by Alameda CTC, CD+A

¹⁶ Alameda CTC. [Alameda Countywide Bikeways Network](#) Executive Report. December 2022. P.3. Accessed August 2025.

Transportation Policies and Standards

Multimodal Mobility and Access

Ongoing and planned improvements to transportation infrastructure along San Pablo Avenue establish a foundation for improving mobility and access for all users. Future efforts will build on this momentum to provide infrastructure and operation systems that best serve the community’s vision for the Specific Plan Area as a vibrant mixed-use district.

T-P.1 Improve Mobility, Access, and Safety for All People

The Specific Plan will improve conditions for people walking, biking, taking transit, driving, making deliveries, as well as emergency response and evacuation and maintenance access along San Pablo Avenue and throughout the Specific Plan Area. The Specific Plan considers particular needs of vulnerable users, including children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

The Specific Plan will support implementation the goals for the City’s Complete Streets Policy and the Vision Zero Action Plan by designing all street and transportation improvements within the Specific Plan Area to enhance mobility, access and safety for people who are walking, biking, taking transit, and driving while providing access for deliveries, freight, emergency response, evacuation and maintenance. The Specific Plan will ensure that design and implementation consider the needs of vulnerable users, including children, seniors, and people of all abilities.

The City is planning to update the Pedestrian Plan and the Vision Zero Action Plan starting in 2026 or 2027. These updates provide the opportunity to further assess pedestrian and other multimodal conditions along San Pablo Avenue, and to prioritize multimodal recommendations and implementation of improvements identified in this Plan at a citywide level. As a part of these plan updates, the City will review and update regulations for maintaining accessibility for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit riders during construction in the Specific Plan Area, as well as coordinating with Caltrans to receive their agreement with the regulations. See also **Chapter 6 Administration and Implementation** and other specific recommendations in this chapter.

T-P.2 Future Transportation Study Needs for San Pablo Avenue

The Alameda CTC Bus and Bike Lanes Project currently ends at Heinz Street and San Pablo Avenue. Through previous planning and engagement efforts, the community expressed concerns regarding feasibility and the significant roadway changes required to extend dedicated bus or bicycle facilities through Berkeley along San Pablo Avenue. These challenges include removal of all or some portions of the medians which hold mature street trees. With a growing population and reduced off-street parking requirements for all developments given proximity to high-quality transit (See off-street parking requirements discussion in the *Parking and Curb Management* section of this chapter), the demand for alternative transportation options is likely to increase. It is expected that the City will need to revisit the design of Berkeley’s portion of San Pablo Avenue in the future.

The Specific Plan recommends that the City, in partnership with Alameda CTC, AC Transit and Caltrans, and the City of Albany, explore a potential follow-up planning and design process to evaluate multimodal conceptual design options for San Pablo Avenue from Heinz Avenue to the Alameda County line. This potential future process could study a range of potential bike and bus improvements, including bus rapid transit, bus only lanes, and separated bike lanes. Depending on development activity in Berkeley and other San Pablo Avenue communities there may also be some future interest in studying the potential for streetcar service.

A multimodal study for San Pablo Avenue is a priority for the Project Plan Area, but it has not been identified as a priority in the on-going update to the City of Berkeley Bicycle Plan and has not been identified as a priority in other City transportation documents. The upcoming updates to the Vision Zero Action Plan and the Pedestrian Plan should consider identifying a multimodal study as a city-level priority.

T-P.3 Maintain and Improve Bus Service in Collaboration with Alameda CTC and AC Transit

Maintain existing transit service levels along San Pablo Avenue and preserve key east-west “secondary route” connections identified in the City of Berkeley’s General Plan. In alignment with the City of Berkeley’s Transit First Policy (Policy T-2)¹⁷, the City will continue to coordinate with AC Transit to improve service on San Pablo Avenue as needed to enhance east-west service and improve infrastructure. This includes continuing to explore the implementation of AC Transit’s recommendations for primary transit routes and the need for improved connections to the Ashby and North Berkeley BART stations, which is further discussed in BART’s station and access plan.¹⁸ A key element of this approach will be identifying the appropriate lead agency for such studies and project development, as well as adequate funding. Efforts will be guided by the Transit First Policy Implementation Plan to ensure a coordinated and effective approach.

T-P.4 Implement Signal Timing and Transit Signal Priority (TSP)

In collaboration with Caltrans and AC Transit, identify and implement additional TSP improvements at signalized intersections and signal timing that favors transit operations to increase transit reliability and encourage ridership. This effort will build upon improvements made by AC Transit. This signal timing assessment will also identify changes to signal timing to manage mixed flow traffic speeds, encouraging travel at or below the speed limit. TSP provisions should also require emergency-vehicle preemption or prioritization, and the Fire Department should participate in the design, testing and performance monitoring of any TSP changes.

Parking and Curb Management

Many businesses along San Pablo Avenue depend on on-street parking for customer access and loading, particularly those without private parking lots or off-street loading.

With new residential developments, community members have raised concerns about parking availability to support the growing population. Business owners have also noted issues such as reduced storefront visibility due to parked cars and lack of parking enforcement leading to vehicles blocking parking spaces throughout the day.

Curb space in the Specific Plan Area, both on San Pablo Avenue and crossing streets, will be managed to support the needs of both businesses and residents, with a shared goal of maintaining available on-street parking access even during periods of peak demand. The Specific Plan recommends a strategy to ensure that on-street parking remains available for customers and other visitors arriving by car.

Provision of parking along San Pablo Avenue needs to be balanced with multimodal needs of all people that use San Pablo Avenue. See *T-P.2 Future Transportation Study Needs for San Pablo Avenue* regarding the need to study and implement multimodal improvements along San Pablo Avenue.



Off-Street Parking Requirements

Assembly Bill (AB) 2097 is a California law that prohibits public agencies or cities from imposing minimum automobile parking requirements on most developments located within a half-mile radius of major transit stops.

BMC 23.322.070 Establishes off-street parking maximums for residential development.

As San Pablo Avenue is a major transit corridor (See *Transit Network*), most of the Specific Plan Area falls under both guidelines and is largely exempt from minimum parking requirements.

¹⁷ City of Berkeley [Transit-First Implementation Plan](#), 2023. Pp. 7-8. Accessed 20 May 2026

¹⁸ BART, [Berkeley-El Cerrito Corridor Access Plan](#), February 2023. P. 66. Accessed 4 September 2025.

T-P.5 Create an Active Parking and Loading Management Program for the Specific Plan Area

The program will include strategies such as adjusting parking meter rates and time limits through the City's goBerkeley Parking Program. It will also consider expanding metered parking locations to side streets with commercial frontages to maintain the City's target occupancy rate of 65 to 85 percent on metered blocks. Increased enforcement will accompany these measures to ensure compliance and support consistent parking turnover.

Currently, the City of Berkeley is not encouraging the establishment of additional Residential Parking Permit (RPP) areas, primarily due to cost considerations. As the effectiveness of pipeline and potential future multimodal improvements are assessed, the City will have an opportunity to reassess parking and loading needs along San Pablo Avenue and surrounding neighborhoods. Based on these assessments, the City Council will consider whether to establish new RPP area(s) in adjacent neighborhoods and whether to allow merchants to purchase permits to park in those areas.

Implement Mobility Hubs

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) defines a Mobility Hub as an access point for “[...] travelers of all backgrounds to access multiple transportation options and supportive amenities. Built on the backbone of frequent and high-capacity transit, Mobility Hubs offer a safe, comfortable, convenient, and accessible space to seamlessly transfer across different travel modes.”¹⁹ Identifying a Mobility Hub can strengthen eligibility for the Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC) program, improve transit access, and potentially improve eligibility for some funding sources. In 2020, MTC identified the University Avenue Node as a potential Mobility Hub.²⁰

T-P.6 Implement Mobility Hub Features in the University Avenue Node

In collaboration with MTC and AC Transit, the City will explore implementation of Mobility Hub strategies and features outlined in the [Mobility Hub Implementation Playbook](#).

Improvements Potential mobility hub features in the University Node include:

- Improvements to bus stops and transit wayfinding.
- Bike share and shared micromobility stations.
- Bike corrals in parking lanes, and designated loading areas for ride-hail services, urban freight and delivery.

Install a bike corral near the bike boulevard crossing improvement at Addison Street as a first step toward creating a mobility hub in the University Avenue Designated Node.

T-P.7 Evaluate Other Locations for Some Mobility Hub Features

Evaluate the potential for Mobility Hub features at other Designated Nodes or on a Specific Plan Area-wide basis, especially when transit service levels change. Even in locations that may not fully meet MTC's criteria for a designated Mobility Hub, the City will consider incorporating select hub features.

¹⁹ Metropolitan Transportation Commission. [MTC Mobility Hub Implementation Playbook](#). 30 April. 2021, p. 5. Accessed June 4, 2025

²⁰ Metropolitan Transportation Commission. [San Francisco Bay Region Mobility Hubs](#). ArcGIS Online Map Viewer. Accessed June 4, 2025

Multimodal Safety

Collision data identifies San Pablo Avenue as one of Berkeley’s most high-injury corridors, indicated the need for targeted safety interventions that reduce vehicle speeds, enhance visibility, and improve safety for all travel modes (See Figure 5.6). Improving sidewalk safety must also include interventions to support personal security and comfort. Measures such as pedestrian-scale lighting, wider sidewalks and Universal Design are further discussed in the Public Realm section of this chapter (see *PR-P. 14 Design for People of All Ages and Abilities*).

Manage Vehicle Speeds and Lowering Speed Limit

Reducing vehicle speeds along San Pablo Avenue can help create a safer, quieter, and more welcoming environment that supports the transformation of the Specific Plan Area into a vibrant mixed-use district.



Figure 5.6 Dwight and San Pablo Avenue Intersection

*The existing crossing lacks safety interventions.
Photo by CD+A*

T-P.8 Lower Speed Limit on San Pablo Avenue

San Pablo Avenue currently has a posted speed limit of 30 mph. In California, speed limits are primarily established based on rounding the 85th percentile speed²¹ observed in an Engineering and Traffic Study (E&TS) to the nearest five mph. However, Assembly Bill 43 (2022) allows for greater flexibility in setting speed limits that better reflect safe road conditions for all users through the following mechanisms:

Agencies may round the 85th percentile speed observed in an E&TS down to the nearest five mph, even when the 85th percentile speed is ordinarily rounded up.

For roadways where the 85th percentile speed is ordinarily rounded down, agencies may reduce the speed limit by an additional five mph if the reasons for the lower limit are documented in an E&TS.

Local agencies may reduce the speed limits calculated in an E&TS by an additional five mph on designated Safety Corridors or corridors adjacent to land generating high bicycle and pedestrian volumes.

Regardless of the findings of the E&TS, local agencies may retain the existing speed limit or, if the immediate prior speed limit was lower than the existing speed limit, reduce the speed limit by five mph.

Local agencies may reduce speed limits from 30 mph to 25 mph (or from 25 mph to 20 mph) in Business Activity Districts without needing an E&TS.

Because San Pablo Avenue is operated by Caltrans, only the first two listed provisions apply.²² The City will coordinate with Caltrans and AC Transit to conduct an E&TS, with the goal of reducing the posted speed limit from 30 mph to 25 mph. A lower speed limit would complement other proposed traffic calming measures and pedestrian and bicycle safety enhancements along San Pablo Avenue. Signal timing adjustments at the intersections may also be needed to support this change. Ultimately, Caltrans has the authority to set the speed limit on San Pablo Avenue, because the full length of the street in Berkeley is a

Speeding and safety

Collision data for San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley indicates that from 2018 to 2022 unsafe speed was the primary collision factor in 26 percent of collisions that resulted in an injury or fatality, more than any other collision factor.

²¹ The 85th percentile speed is the speed at or below which 85% of vehicles are observed to travel under free-flowing conditions.

²² California Department of Transportation. [California Manual for Setting Speed Limits](#). Revised March 2025, pp. 19, 31-24

State Highway. The E&TS should include a supplementary assessment of how lowering the speed limit would affect transit performance in terms of speed and reliability.

If the E&TS process results in the speed limit remaining at 30 mph, but the E&TS shows that a high proportion of drivers are exceeding the speed limit. This information could be used for the City to continue advocating to expand the AB 645 speed safety pilot program to include Berkeley and potentially San Pablo Avenue as a pilot urban state highway high-injury corridor pilot.²³

Continue to Improve Intersections

Completed and ongoing intersection improvement projects along San Pablo Avenue (see **Appendix D**) demonstrate a broad commitment to improve safety and multimodal connectivity. While these efforts addressed important locations, they represent only a portion of a comprehensive, long-term commitment to improving intersections throughout the street. Opportunities remain to expand existing improvements – for example, by adding pedestrian lighting – and to apply consistent safety enhancements across all intersections. The following policies will inform the design and upgrades to San Pablo Avenue and other streets throughout the Specific Plan Area.

Note that improvements to San Pablo Avenue and its intersections with other streets are required to be approved by Caltrans.

T-P.9 Pedestrian Crossing Frequency

In an urban mixed-use area, frequent and safe pedestrian marked crossings are desired. According to the City of Berkeley Pedestrian Plan (2020), the average distance between marked crosswalks along San Pablo Avenue is 380 feet, with the longest gap reaching 625 feet between Gilman Street and Harrison Street.

Guideline To improve pedestrian convenience and reduce unsafe crossings at unmarked locations, the City should consider adding mid-block marked crosswalks at locations where the distance between marked crosswalks exceeds 600 feet.²⁴

- With the expansion of multiple multifamily residential developments between Gilman Street and Harrison Street, the long distance (approximately 620 ft.) between these intersections makes it a strong candidate for installation of a mid-block crossing to support increased pedestrian activity.
- Other locations to consider new mid-block marked crosswalks include the blocks between Gilman Street and Camelia Street (~600 feet), Cedar Street and Virginia Street (~615 feet), Allston Way and Bancroft Way (~615 feet), and Channing Way and Dwight Way (~590 feet).
- Safe crossing features to align with *T-P. 10 Intersection Improvements*.

T-P.10 Intersection Improvements

San Pablo Avenue has undergone several intersection improvements and continues to be the focus of additional planned improvements led by both Caltrans and Alameda CTC. A follow-up safety study should be explored after the completion of these projects to identify additional locations where improvements are needed and to assess whether any additional elements could enhance the effectiveness of previously implemented upgrades.

Improvements To consider at intersections include the following (Intersection specific lists of potential improvements are in **Appendix D**):

- **Signalized Intersections** – These locations are to be evaluated for potential improvements such as curb extensions on side-streets, median refuge islands where they do not currently exist, and

²³ This is consistent with the Berkeley City Council’s April 29, 2025 adoption a resolution asking the State Legislature to add the City to the existing program or similar program. (See [Resolution No. 17,744-N.S.](#))

²⁴ City of Berkeley. [Pedestrian Plan Appendix B: Toolbox of Pedestrian Improvements](#). [Pedestrian Plan Appendix B: Toolbox of Pedestrian Improvements](#), adopted 2020. P. 10

improved roadway lighting and pedestrian-scale lighting to enhance visibility of people entering and crossing the street. Improvements for bicycles should be considered pursuant to the toolbox recommendations of the Bike Plan, where they do not exist. The need and benefit of adding protected left turns at intersections that lack them should be assessed, along with consideration of right-turn-on-red prohibitions.

- **Un-Signalized Intersections** – These intersections are to be evaluated for physical and lighting improvements similar to those listed for signalized intersections. The need for additional or upgraded traffic flashers or signals should be evaluated, such as rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB), pedestrian hybrid beacons (PHB), or full traffic signals.

Street Improvements (Appendix D)

Potential improvements are scoped to build upon those of the San Pablo Avenue Safety Enhancement project which have not been constructed at the time of this Plan's adoption. Other intersection improvements have been recently completed. The combination of these changes defines the baseline for future transportation design and investment. The list of improvements in **Appendix D** is a compilation of improvements defined by the 2020 Pedestrian Plan and additional potential improvements. This list may be further refined as part of a planned update to the Pedestrian Plan.

In the long term, as population grows in the Specific Plan Area, and therefore pedestrian and bicycle activity increases within the Specific Plan Area, particularly in Designated Nodes, intersections have to be evaluated for the potential addition of full pedestrian signal phases. A full pedestrian phase stops all vehicle traffic while pedestrians cross in all directions, including diagonal crossings, also known as pedestrian scrambles. These signal phases improve pedestrian safety at intersections with high pedestrian volumes and complex turning movements. Detailed guidance on all-way pedestrian crossings is provided in the [Berkeley Pedestrian Plan \(2020\), Appendix B: All-Way Pedestrian Crossings, p. B-18](#).

T-P.11 Pedestrian Crossing Design

Pedestrian crossing design in Berkeley is guided by the City of Berkeley Pedestrian Plan (2020), Appendix B: Engineering & Design Guidance. Improvements to pedestrian crossings along San Pablo Avenue must also comply with the requirements of the Caltrans Highway Design Manual or receive approval for an exception from Caltrans.

Improvements along San Pablo Avenue shall prioritize the following:

- **Curb extensions** – The Alameda CTC Safety Enhancements project is planning bus curb extensions at select locations on San Pablo Avenue. While curb extensions into San Pablo Avenue can interfere with the potential for future multimodal improvements to use the full roadway width between existing curbs (see *T-P.2 Future Transportation Study Needs for San Pablo Avenue* for discussion of future multimodal study), the City should evaluate additional bus stop locations as potential opportunities for bus stop curb extensions. These also have the potential to be extended to provide additional public space, see *PR-P.17 Design and Use of Curb Extensions*.
- **Crossing islands** as integral part of medians and crosswalks to shorten the crossing distance.
- **Pedestrian-scale lighting**, where needed per *PR-P.3 Improve Street Lighting for the Safety and Comfort of All Users*.

A map with the crossing locations and improvements is provided in Figure 5.7.

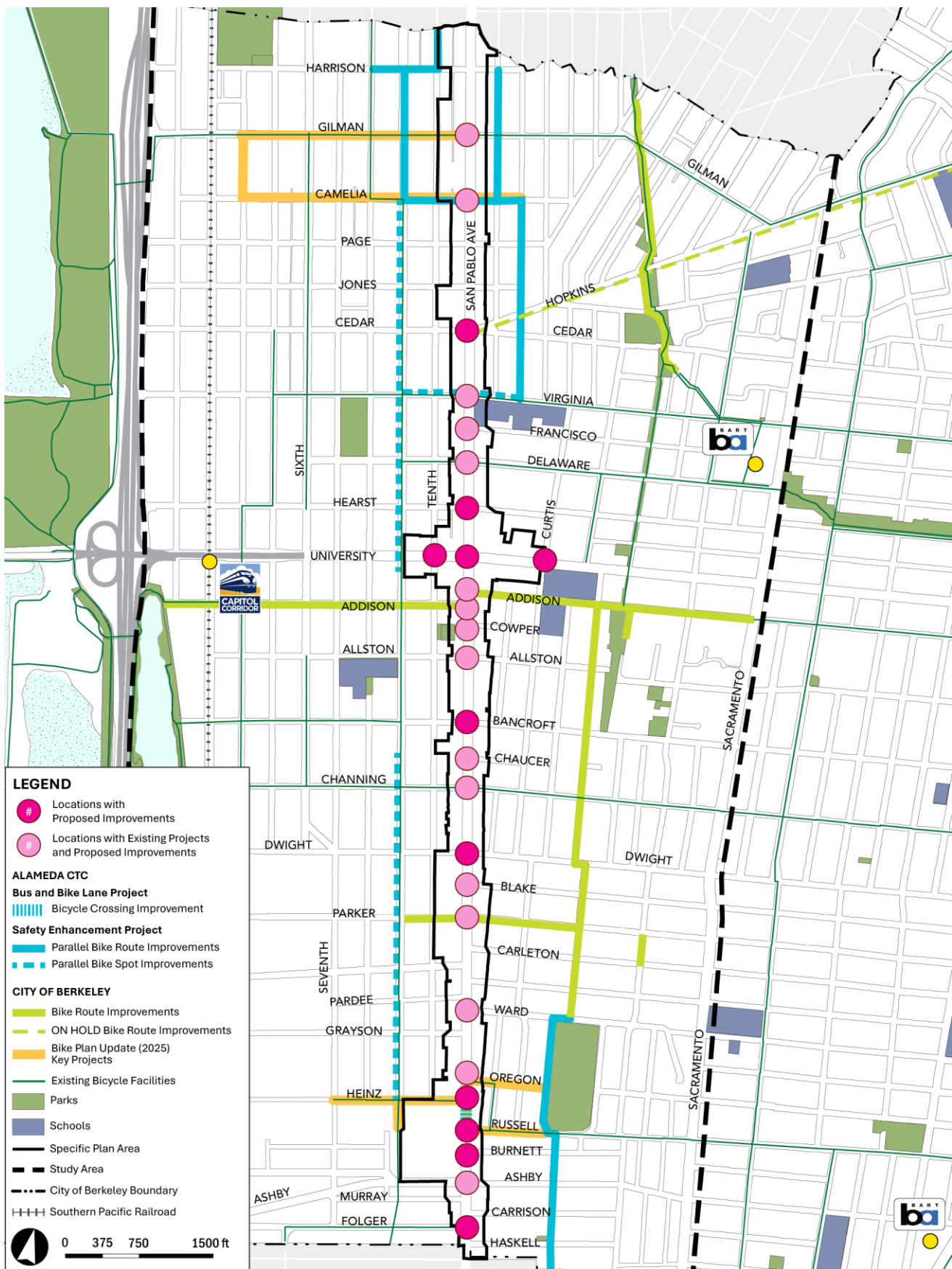


Figure 5.7 Locations with Need for Intersection Improvements

For detailed list, see Appendix D. Source: Alameda CTC, AC Transit, City of Berkeley. 2025.

T-P.12 Minor Side-Street Intersection Improvements

The City will review collision data and monitor driver behavior at minor side-street intersections and make improvements as needed.

Improvements:

- **Raised crosswalks on side-streets** – Elevating the crosswalk between minor side-streets will slow drivers as they enter the minor street. Raising crosswalks should be considered in the context of service and emergency vehicle turn movements. Detailed guidance is provided in the [Berkley Pedestrian Plan Appendix B: Toolbox of Pedestrian Improvements, p. B-19](#).
- **Side-street curb extensions** – When space is available on side-streets provide a curb extension to shorten pedestrian crossing distance. Curb extensions narrow the opening for vehicles and allow for reduced curb radii, which will slow drivers entering the minor street and provide more space for directional curb ramps. Detailed guidance is provided in the [Berkley Pedestrian Plan Appendix B: Toolbox of Pedestrian Improvements, p. B-13](#). (see *PR-P.17 Design and Use of Curb Extensions on Side-Streets* for design and use of curb extensions for public space).
- **Encourage more perpendicular (right-angle) turning movement** at intersections to improve driver visibility of pedestrians in crosswalks. This can be done by extending medians to the crosswalk and providing a median nose to protect the crosswalk where turn movements allow. Intersection legs without medians should have hardened centerlines (see Figure 5.8).

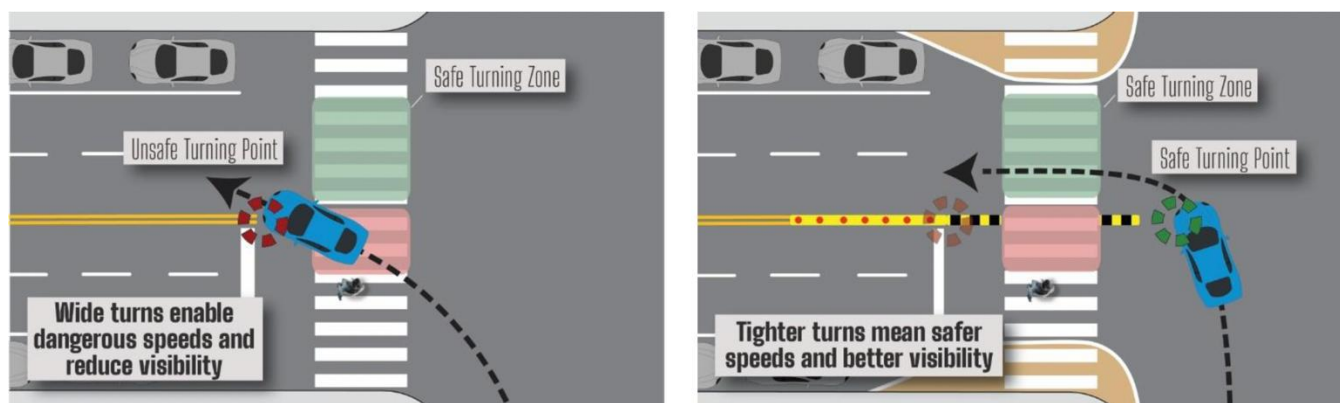


Figure 5.8 Before and After Hardened Centerline Improvement
Graphics by Chicago.gov

T-P.13 Make Safety Improvements at Driveways

Some driveways in the Specific Plan Area have poor visibility for drivers accessing the street from the parking lot, such as the southern driveway at REI/Chipotle/Walgreens center. Driveways will be assessed for adequate sightlines and red curbs provided where sightlines need to be improved. Priority should be given to driveways with more activity, such as along Major Streets and Collector Streets²⁵ and in locations that have a record of collisions.

T-P.14 Prioritizing Multimodal Safety Improvements

The following factors will be used in determining priorities for multimodal safety improvements in the Specific Plan Area.

San Pablo Avenue intersections with Gilman Street, Cedar Street, University Avenue, Addison Street, and Ashby Avenue which are high-injury streets, as defined in the Vision Zero Plan, 2020, and segments of these streets within

²⁵ For definitions of Major Streets and Collector Streets, see General Plan – [Transportation Element](#). Adopted December 18 2001, p.T-31

the Specific Plan Area (see Figure 5.7). Prioritization of improvements to segments of these streets is discussed in *T-P.18 Prioritize connections with Surrounding Neighborhoods and Districts*.

San Pablo Avenue from University Avenue to Dwight Way is a priority area for multimodal improvements as the 2020 Pedestrian Plan identifies this segment as a Prioritized High-Injury Street.

The planned update to the Pedestrian Plan provides an opportunity to reassess all the streets in the Specific Plan Area for designation as Prioritized High-Injury Streets. For example, the Vision Zero Action Plan identifies the full length of San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley as a high-injury street and identifies several fatal injury collisions outside of the University Avenue to Dwight Way segment.

Consider traffic speed and traffic levels when identifying priority locations for safety improvements within the Specific Plan Area.

Intersection improvements at Russell Street and Heinz Street are part of Alameda CTC’s Bus and Bike Lane Project (**Appendix D**). Improvements for bicycle and pedestrian safety and access are identified in the 2026 Bicycle Plan Update in this area.²⁶ Given the Alameda CTC project’s projected completion date of no sooner than 2035, the City should coordinate with Alameda CTC to pursue more immediate upgrades at these intersection and potential bicycle connections on San Pablo Avenue between them.

The Specific Plan calls for continuous review of transportation collision data and the Annual Vision Zero Report to identify safety “hot spots” for targeted assessment and improvements, and to prioritize improvements at intersections that serve key connections, in alignment with *T-P.18: Prioritize connections with Surrounding Neighborhoods and Districts*.

Improve Connections Outside of the Specific Plan Area

Community members consistently described San Pablo Avenue as a barrier separating West Berkeley from the rest of the city. This perception is driven not only by the lack of safe crossings for people walking and biking, but also by the limited number of multimodal, east-west connections to places outside of the Specific Plan Area.

Although several parks are located within a few blocks of San Pablo Avenue, access to these is often hindered by unsafe or indirect pedestrian and bicycle routes. Side-streets that connect current and future residents along San Pablo Avenue to nearby parks and facilities require targeted multimodal improvements. Strengthening these connections will improve equitable access to help overcome the street’s physical divide.

Connections Network

Strengthening east-west connections across San Pablo Avenue is essential to linking adjacent neighborhoods with citywide destinations such as schools, parks and transit stations. Figure 5.9 illustrates the network of planned and completed projects aimed at enhancing these connections. The map identifies potential priority pedestrian and bicycle connections currently missing within the Specific Plan Area and consolidates information from several sources, including the Alameda CTC San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project, City of Berkeley and BART planned Bicycle Improvements, and the proposed facilities from the Bike Plan Update (2026). A subsequent gap analysis highlights areas where east-west connectivity remains limited and where additional infrastructure investments are needed to support safe and continuous bicycle and transit travel.

Figure 5.10 complements this analysis by providing an overview of existing road designations and emergency access and evacuation routes. Comparing the two maps reveals that many major roadways continue to lack complete multimodal facilities.

There are also some locations in the Specific Plan Area where the distance between side streets hinders connections, and *LU-S.4 Mid-Block Passage Incentive* improves accessibility between the Specific Plan Area and surrounding mixed-use industrial districts and neighborhoods adjacent to the Specific Plan Area.

²⁶ City of Berkeley. Berkeley Bicycle Plan update, Final Draft, January 2026. Accessed 24 April 2026. Page 114 and 115.

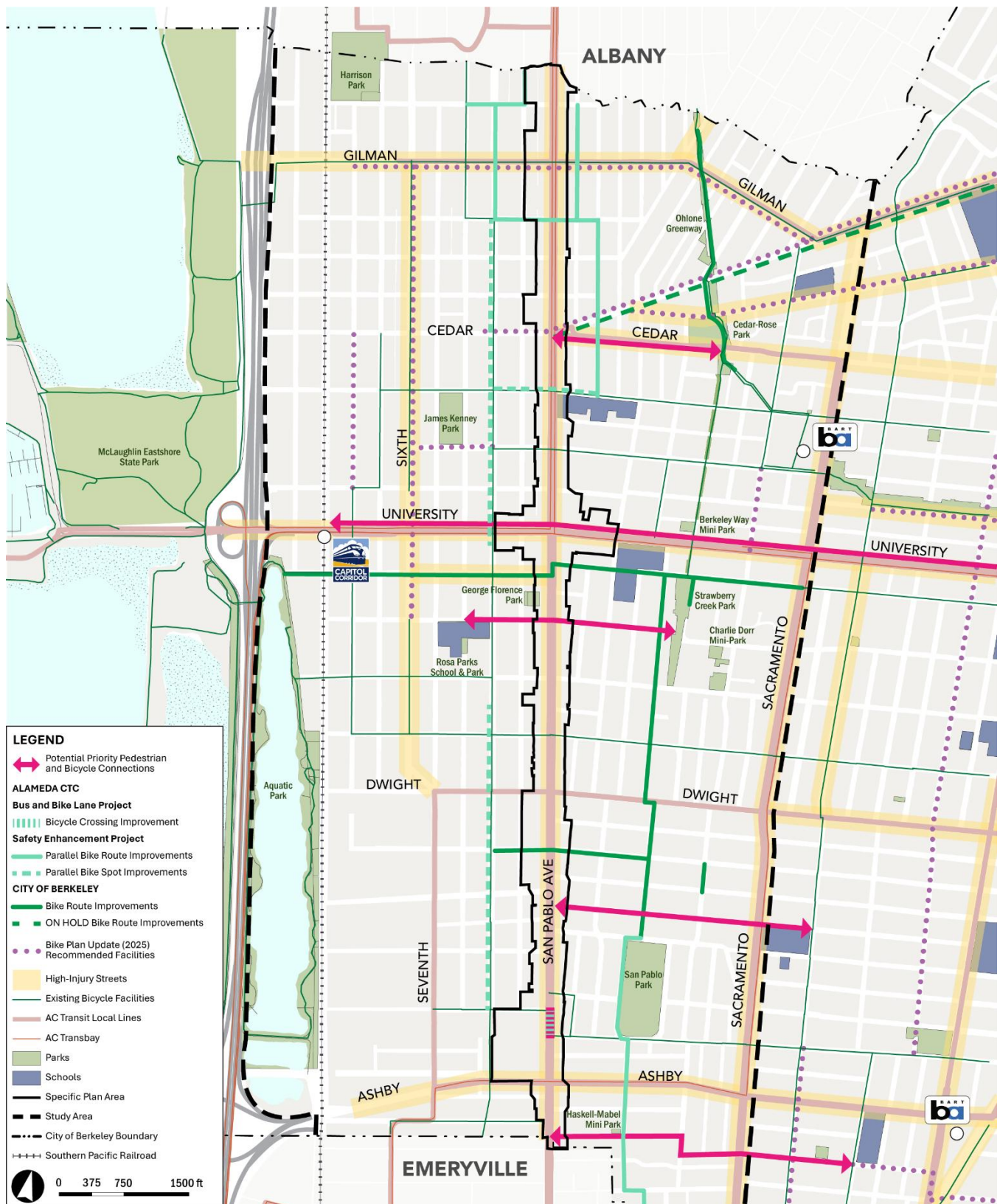


Figure 5.9 Connections Map: Existing and Planned Projects

Source: Alameda CTC, AC Transit, City of Berkeley. 2025.



Figure 5.10 Existing Street Network Map

Source: Alameda CTC, City of Berkeley. 2025.

T-P.15 Transit Improvements

The following efforts will be undertaken by the City with partner agencies to improve reliability and efficiency of transit service connecting the Specific Plan Area to BART, UC Berkeley, Downtown Berkeley, and other major destinations:

- In alignment with Transit-First Policy 18²⁷, explore further study of additional improvements along University Avenue and the Southside area to enhance transit service on Line 51B, strengthening connections between San Pablo Avenue, the Berkeley Amtrak Capitol Corridor Station, Downtown Berkeley, and UC Berkeley.
- Coordinate with AC Transit, BART, and Capitol Corridor to improve connections, reduce transfer wait times, and support future frequency enhancements for east-west bus service that crosses San Pablo Avenue.

For other transit improvement policies, see section *Multimodal Mobility and Access*.

T-P.16 Bicycle Improvements

In alignment with the Berkeley Bicycle Plan (2017), Bicycle Plan Policy D-1, and consistent with the City’s 2026 Bicycle Plan Update, the City will continue to expand and improve a connected, low-stress bikeway network, with emphasis on comfort and safety:

- Improve infrastructure at the intersections at Gilman and Heinz Street, consistent with the City’s 2026 Bicycle Plan Update. These intersections are critical for enhancing east-west connectivity and safety. Recommended improvements include studying an extension to the existing cycletrack on Gilman Street from 4th Street to San Pablo Avenue and establishing an offset cycletrack crossing at Heinz Street to connect with Russell or Oregon Street and the larger bicycle boulevard network.
- Improve bicycle access for elementary and middle school students traveling to schools located east and west of San Pablo Avenue. Prioritize infrastructure improvements that create continuous, low-stress routes between neighborhoods and school campuses.
- Enhance bicycle connectivity to regional transit, including a safer and direct link to the Amtrak Capitol Corridor rail station to support multimodal travel options for students, commuters, and residents.

As bicycle improvements are made, provide bicycle wayfinding and directional signage consistent with standards and guidance in the Berkeley Bike Plan (2020), Appendix F and the 2026 Bicycle Plan Update to help navigate bicycle riders through intersections, and guide them to local and regional destinations. If bike lanes are not established on San Pablo Avenue, bicycle signage on the street must direct cyclists to the nearest bicycle boulevards and parallel routes to provide safe alternatives.

To help cyclists take advantage of these improvements and to access destinations bicycle parking in the Specific Plan Area will be prioritized. At a minimum, provide at least one bike rack near intersections where a bicycle facility crosses San Pablo Avenue. See *T-P.6 Implement Mobility Hub features in the University Avenue Node* and *PR-S.9 Bicycle Racks*.

²⁷ City of Berkeley [Transit-First Implementation Plan](#), 2023. Pp. 49-50. Accessed 20 May 2026

T-P.17 Pedestrian Improvements

In alignment with the Pedestrian Plan (2020), additional improvements in the Specific Plan Area prioritize comfort, safety, and accessibility for pedestrians; the following priorities will be reflected and refined in the pending update to the Pedestrian Plan:

- Provide crosswalk improvements, traffic calming, and sidewalk upgrades along key walking corridors for elementary and middle school students, such as Cedar Street, Virginia Street, and Allston Way.
- Coordinate with any Alameda County Transportation Commission Safe Routes to School Safety Assessment plans along key walking routes that are within proximity to transit stops and commercial destinations.
- Provide safe, direct, and accessible pedestrian connections to major employers in West Berkeley, North Berkeley and Ashby BART stations, and the Capitol Corridor rail station.

For sidewalk standards, see *PR-S.1 Sidewalk Zone Standards* and other policies and standards in the Sidewalk Space section.

For pedestrian crossing safety and improvements, see policies and standards in the *Continue to Improve Intersections* section.

For streetscape improvements to provide lighting, shading, and other amenities for pedestrians, see the Public Realm policies and standards in the *Streetscape* section.

Example Implementation

Pedestrian improvements resulting from analysis of an intersection that is already signalized, such as Allston Way, could include extending the San Pablo Avenue median noses toward crosswalks, hardening centerlines on side-streets, and/or installing pedestrian lighting at corners. These changes would encourage safe turning movements to and from San Pablo Avenue and improve visibility of pedestrians at night. Other intersections along Allston Way between San Pablo Avenue, Rosa Parks Elementary School and Strawberry Creek Park could also be assessed and improved to enhance connections between these destinations and the Specific Plan Area.

T-P.18 Prioritize Connections with Surrounding Neighborhoods and Districts

As development occurs in the Specific Plan Area, new residents will need safe and comfortable multimodal connections to parks, schools, grocery stores, and other uses in the surrounding community. These connections will be designed to accommodate users of all ages and abilities. The following priorities are based on public comment received during the Specific Plan planning process and expected needs of future residents. Future updates to the citywide Pedestrian Plan and Bicycle Plan can verify future residents' needs:

- Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle improvements on streets that provide access to schools and parks, as well as other routes that typically serve students in the Specific Plan Area and adjacent neighborhoods to the east and west of San Pablo Avenue, including Longfellow Middle School at its temporary location just east of San Pablo Avenue, between Virginia Street and Francisco Street (The School is currently scheduled to return to original location to the east of Sacramento Street between Derby and Ward Streets in Summer 2027)
- Consider improvements that can serve the Berkeley Adult School and Berkeley Unified School District housing in the longer term.
- Bike boulevards that cross San Pablo Avenue and provide parallel access in adjacent neighborhoods.
- Streets within $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of housing for elderly people.
- Prioritize efforts in alignment with San Pablo Avenue improvement priorities discussed in *T-P.14 Prioritizing Multimodal Safety Improvements*.



Public Input

During a public open house, parents with a young child said that they appreciated the proximity of San Pablo Park to their home, a mixed-use apartment on San Pablo Avenue near Ashby Avenue. However, they had decided to move because of the poor quality of the pedestrian connection from their apartment to the park.

T-P.19 Monitor Changing Multimodal Needs and Conditions

As multimodal activity and development increase within the Specific Plan Area and surrounding Study Area, the City will coordinate with local, county, regional, and state transportation agency partners to monitor travel patterns and evaluate the need for additional improvements to the connection network, including as needed:

- **Coordinate with Citywide priorities** – The planned updates to the Vision Zero Action Plan and the Pedestrian Plan in 2026-2027 provide the opportunity to further assess and prioritize multimodal and pedestrian-focused improvements in the Specific Plan Area at a citywide policy level. The prioritization must reflect the Specific Plan Area being planned to accommodate a significant portion (about 20 percent) of new residential development in the city over the next eight or more years.
- **Regional traffic** – Coordinate with Caltrans to monitor regional traffic, trips that pass-through Berkeley on Specific Plan Area streets and intersections with streets that have interchanges on I-80 to understand its impacts on multimodal safety and mobility.
- **Transit service and use** – Work with AC Transit to monitor travel time and reliability of bus service on streets and routes within the Specific Plan Area that provide connections from the Specific Plan Area to the surrounding communities and region. Periodically survey existing and potential transit riders as the population in the Specific Plan Area grows, to identify their travel needs. Use the results to modify bus service as appropriate to better align with changing demand.
- **Vulnerable user needs** – Monitor changes in land use, demographics, and traffic safety with a focus on vulnerable users, including children, seniors, and people with disabilities. For example, if new senior housing or services are developed, evaluate the surrounding streets for needed improvements and consider reprioritizing planned improvements so they are implemented sooner.

This monitoring and assessment will be coordinated with updates to the City's modal plans and will also address multimodal intersections and priority improvement lists that relate to *T-P. 10 Intersection Improvements*, *T-P. 11 Pedestrian Crossing Design*, *T-P. 12 Minor Side-Street Intersection Improvements* and *T-P. 14 Prioritizing Multimodal Safety Improvements*.

Public Realm Policies, Standards, and Projects

The public realm in the Specific Plan Area must satisfy a broad range of transportation, social, and economic needs. The policies, standards, and projects identified in this section are intended to create an inviting, safe, comfortable, and functional environment along San Pablo Avenue and throughout the Specific Plan Area. The public realm should enable people to move easily and safely along the street, whether accessing businesses, transit, homes, parked vehicles or bicycles, and also provide welcoming spaces to meet a friend, exercise, and socialize.

Sidewalk Space

The sidewalk along San Pablo Avenue is typically 13 feet wide with variations in the use and condition of the sidewalk space, see Figures 5.11. In many areas, private landscaping and other encroachments reduce usable space, especially where pavement is damaged around tree wells. These constraints, combined with fast-moving traffic, were frequently raised by community members as safety and comfort concerns. Several mixed-use developments constructed after 2010 include setbacks that expand the sidewalk with additional landscaping or pavement. Encouraging similar setbacks in future development presents one of the few opportunities to increase public space along San Pablo Avenue.

A well-designed sidewalk needs to provide enough space for safe, comfortable, and active use by all. The following policies and standards are intended to ensure that new development supports accessibility, safety, and vibrant pedestrian activity. The following policies and standards apply specifically to San Pablo Avenue and immediate side-streets, where noted. For guidance on other streets, refer to the City of Berkeley Pedestrian Plan (2020), Appendix B Engineering & Design Guidance.

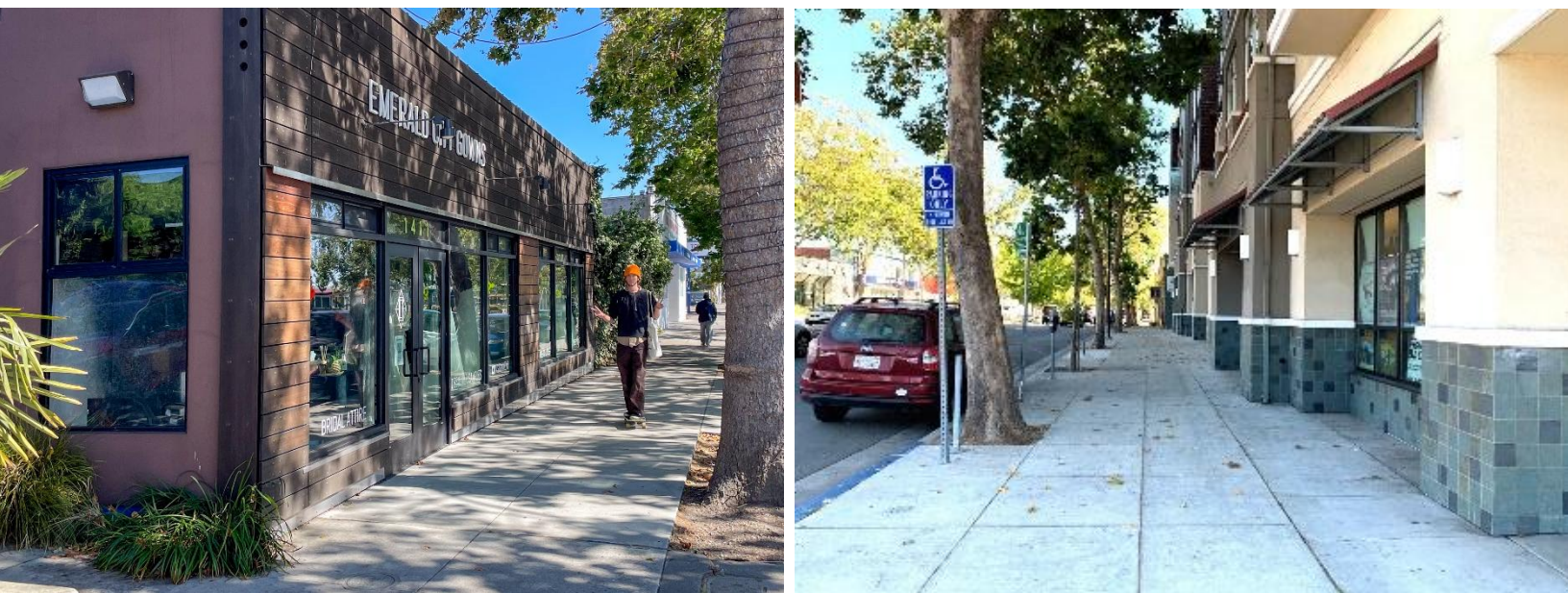


Figure 5.11 Sidewalks on San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley

Left: Typical 13 foot sidewalk in front of 1411 San Pablo Avenue. Right: Sidewalk with additional setback in front of 1808 San Pablo Avenue

PR-P.1 Sidewalk Zones

To serve the range of uses and infrastructure located within sidewalks, design standards define three zones across the sidewalk width: the Pedestrian Zone, the Amenity Zone, and the Frontage Zone (see Figure 5.12). As San Pablo Avenue is a state highway, Caltrans has jurisdiction over the right-of-way, including sidewalks. The City is responsible for sidewalk maintenance and implements improvements to them in coordination with Caltrans.

The Berkeley Pedestrian Plan (2020)²⁸ defines preferred widths for these zones for a Mixed-Use Residential Boulevard like San Pablo Avenue as follows:

Frontage Zone: 2 feet

Pedestrian Zone: 8 to 12 feet

Amenity Zone: 6 to 10 feet

Total Sidewalk: 16 to 24 feet

The existing sidewalks along San Pablo Avenue are typically 13 feet wide. This width is 3 feet narrower than the desired minimum as defined in the Pedestrian Plan. The sidewalk area cannot be widened within the existing public right of way.

To address this constraint, the Specific Plan standards define an approach that varies based on available sidewalk width to best meet the intentions of the Pedestrian Plan guidance (See Figures 5.13 and 5.14). While typical sidewalk width on San Pablo Avenue is 13 feet, there are some places where the sidewalk is 12 feet wide at the narrowest. **The Specific Plan establishes a minimum required sidewalk width of 16 feet along San Pablo Avenue, University Avenue, Gilman Street, Cedar Avenue/Hopkins Street, Dwight Way and Ashby Avenue**, which is achieved by widening the sidewalks where new development occurs. In the *Zoning Ordinance*, the required minimum Ground Floor Frontage Setbacks work in tandem with this requirement.

PR-S.1 Sidewalk Zone Standards provides minimum widths for sidewalk zones along San Pablo Avenue. New development is incentivized to provide additional sidewalk space beyond the minimum 16 feet through *PR-P.2 Sidewalk Incentive* and standard *LU-S.1 Sidewalk Expansion Incentive*. See Table 5.1 for minimum zone width requirements.



Figure 5.12 Example of the Sidewalk Zones
Photo by CD+A

PR-S.1 Sidewalk Zone Standards

Pedestrian Zone: This is the unobstructed portion of the sidewalk designated for pedestrian movement. The minimum required width for this zone varies and is based on the level of activity. Due to the existing right-of-way constraints within the Specific Plan Area, the Pedestrian Zone can be offset along the street to accommodate different sidewalk space needs in the Amenity and Frontage Zones.

Amenity Zone: This is the zone between the street and the Pedestrian Zone. It provides streetscape elements and buffers pedestrians from vehicle traffic. This zone includes the 6-inch curb at the edge of the sidewalk. The width varies as needed while ensuring the adjacent Pedestrian Zone meets minimum pedestrian clearance requirements. See Figures 5.13 and 5.14 for examples. The Amenity Zone can accommodate:

- Street tree wells (minimum 4 feet; see this chapter, *Street Trees*);
- Public seating (5 to 6 feet where provided);

²⁸ City of Berkeley. [2020 Pedestrian Plan – Appendix B](#), Adopted January 2021. Pp. 7-8.

- Other street furniture, such as bicycle racks (see *PR-S.9 Bicycle Racks*);
- Bus stop amenities (see *PR-P.10 Continue to Improve Bus Stops*);
- Street and pedestrian light poles, signal poles, utility boxes and panels, and other elements as needed (for more about lighting see *PR-P.3 Improve Street Lighting for the Safety and Comfort of All Users*)

Frontage Zone:

This is the zone between the Pedestrian Zone and adjacent property and provides a buffer between people walking in the Pedestrian Zone and adjacent buildings. This zone can accommodate features such as outdoor seating, additional landscaping, or expanded general sidewalk space, see Figure 5.14 for examples. Improvements within the Frontage Zone must be installed and maintained by the property owner or adjacent business.

- A maximum of 20 percent of the the Frontage Zone area may be permanent in the ground or raised landscaped areas. Pots and other above-ground planters that can be easily removed from the sidewalk are preferred for flexibility of use over time, and may cover a maximum of 30 percent of the Frontage Zone area.

Table 5.1 Sidewalk Zone Width Requirements

ZONE	EXISTING	NEW DEVELOPMENT
Pedestrian Zone	Minimum 7 feet	Minimum 8 feet
Amenity Zone	No minimum	Minimum 3.5 feet
Frontage Zone	Minimum 6-inch [1]	Minimum 4 feet

Notes:

[1] If an adjacent business applies for and receives an encroachment permit, the zone may extend up to 3.5 feet into the sidewalk, provided this does not conflict with the required Pedestrian Zone width (see Figure 5.13).

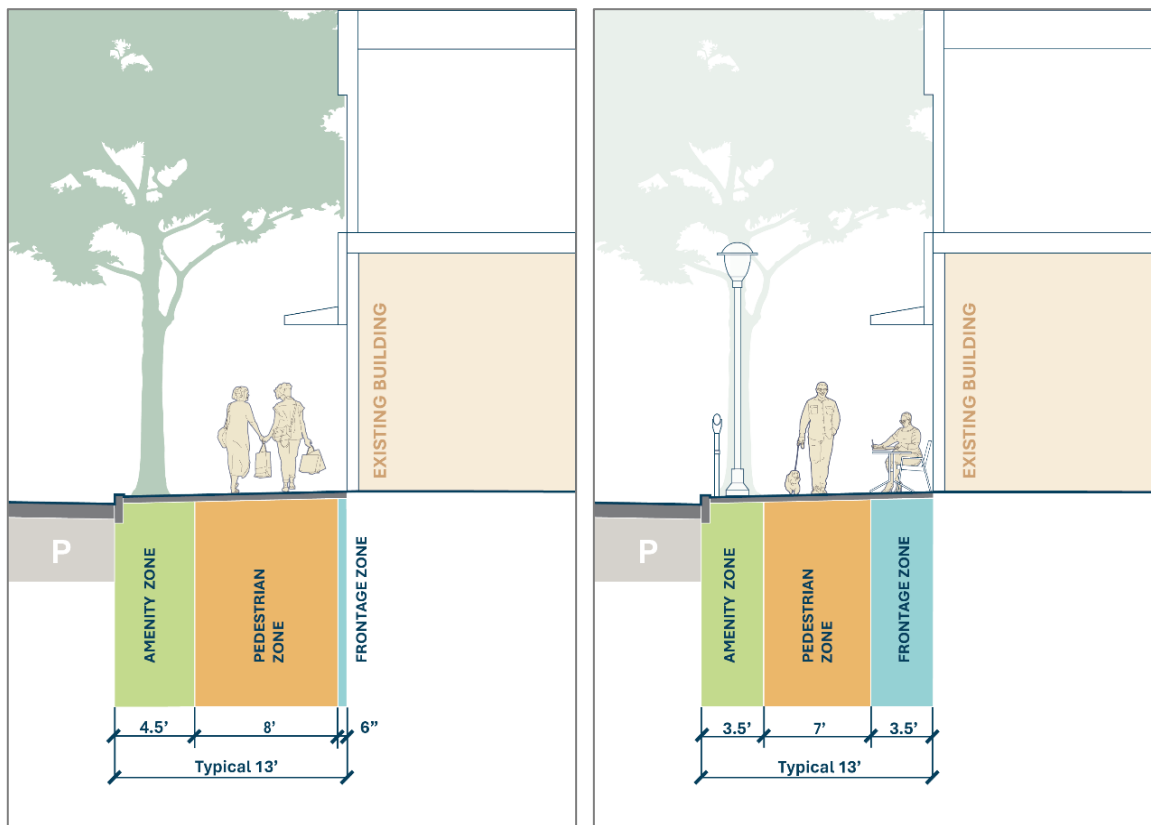


Figure 5.13 Sidewalk Zones Condition at Existing Buildings

Left: Sidewalk Zones at tree well. Right: Sidewalk Zones with outdoor seating in the right way.

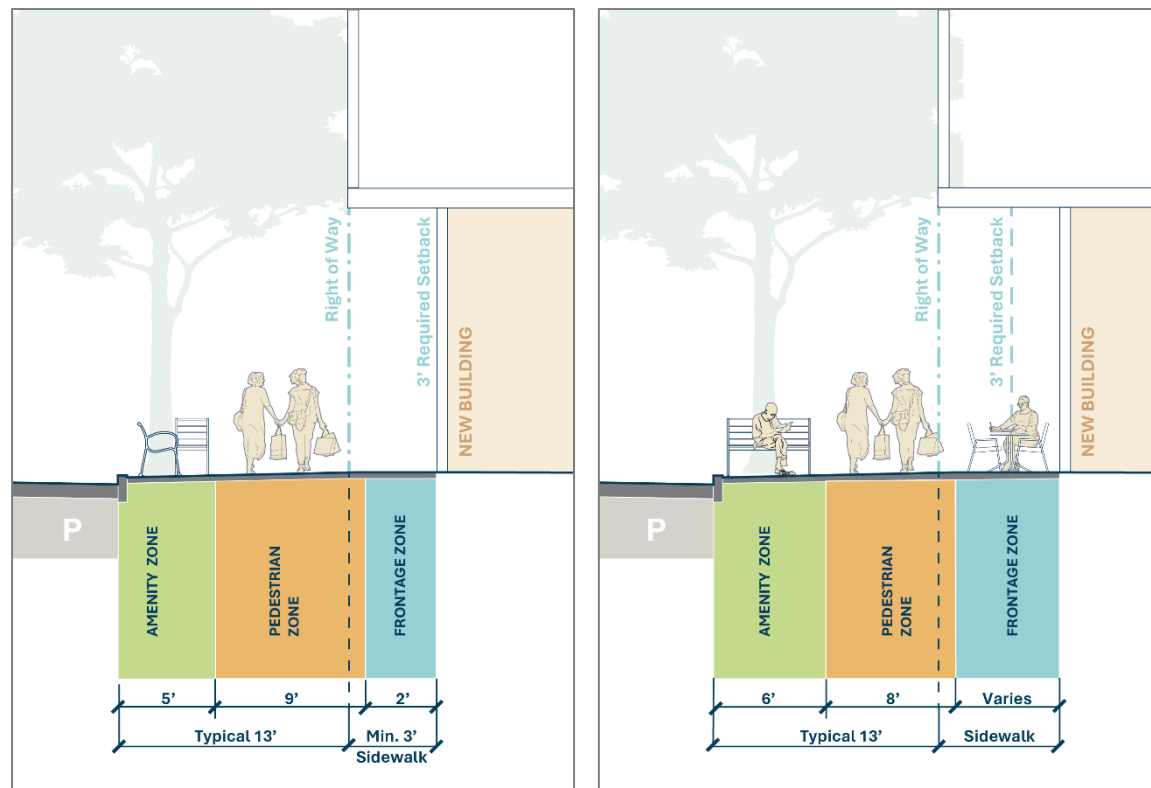


Figure 5.14 Sidewalk Zones Condition at New Developments

Left: Outdoor seating in setback. Right: Sidewalk expansion.

PR-P.2 Sidewalk Incentive

Widening the sidewalk improves pedestrian comfort, increases the distance between the Pedestrian Zone and roadway, and allows more space in the Amenity and Frontage Zones, resulting in more space for social and economic activity within the public realm. Some recent mixed-use residential developments incorporate front setbacks that effectively widen the sidewalk to enhance the pedestrian experience and contribute to a more attractive streetscape (see Figure 5.15). Widening the sidewalk beyond the minimum requirement is encouraged and supported by *LU-S.1 Sidewalk Expansion Incentive*.

Where developments provide an additional setback to widen the sidewalk, the additional space can be allocated to any of the sidewalk zones. For example, the Amenity Zone could be widened to allow for additional landscaping and seating, or amenities for an adjacent bus stop or the Frontage Zone could be widened to accommodate public seating, outdoor dining, or additional landscape area.



Figure 5.15 Examples of Existing Mixed-Use Residential Developments with Sidewalk Setbacks
 Left: “Bloom Berkeley” 2747 San Pablo Avenue. Right: “The Jones” 2748 San Pablo Avenue.

PR-S.2 Reestablish Sidewalk Width

In several locations along San Pablo Avenue, sidewalks are less than 13 feet wide between the face of curb and landscape along adjacent property frontages. There are a limited number of locations where older buildings are less than 13 feet from face of curb, and these conditions will likely remain. If these locations lack an approved encroachment permit, the full sidewalk width should be reestablished over time as public improvements are made or building permit applications are filed. When adjacent properties are redeveloped the total minimum sidewalk width shall be 16 feet as required in PR-P.1 Sidewalk Zones - the combined width of the sidewalk within the public right of way (13 feet) and a ground floor frontage setback (3 feet).

Streetscape

The Plan updates streetscape standards to improve San Pablo Avenue’s quality and identity of the public realm, and to support the economic and social vitality of the Specific Plan Area. These streetscape standards build upon and update the San Pablo Avenue Public Improvement Plan (2003) and include revised standards on pedestrian-scale lighting, street furnishing, bus stop improvements, medians, trees, and landscaping. Elements of the streetscape standards apply to side-streets within the Specific Plan Area, particularly to University Avenue.

Lighting

Improving pedestrian lighting along San Pablo Avenue was the most consistent need expressed by community members during the Specific Plan process. Existing streetlights are mostly designed to light the roadway and intersections, leaving sidewalks dimly lit, unless there is light spilling from storefronts, nearby buildings, or the occasional pedestrian fixture at a bus stop. This issue was raised in the 2004 San Pablo Avenue Public Improvements Plan, which proposed new lighting standards. While some private developments have added pedestrian-scale lighting, no comprehensive public investment has yet been made. There are similar existing lighting conditions on other streets within the Specific Plan Area. The City has been preparing a citywide streetlighting standards document but it has not been fully drafted to date. The following recommendations should be considered as the citywide standards are finalized; some may be included as San Pablo Specific Plan Area requirements within the final citywide standards document.



Figure 5.16 Pedestrian Light
Source: San Pablo Avenue Public Improvement Plan, 2004



Figure 5.17 Example of Pedestrian Scale Lighting
“Aquatic at Ashby” 3000 San Pablo Avenue. Photo by CD+A

PR-P.3 Improve Street Lighting for the Safety and Comfort of All Users

The following policies and design recommendations build upon those of the 2004 San Pablo Avenue Public Improvement Plan.

Roadway and Pedestrian-Realm Lighting

To cost-effectively improve lighting within the Specific Plan Area, the City should implement the design approach defined in the San Pablo Public Improvement Plan, which calls for the maintenance and incremental improvement of existing roadway lighting. This approach includes attaching pedestrian pendant lights to the existing roadway poles and painting the roadway poles and fixtures the color defined below (see Figure 5.16). Depending on roadway pole spacing, one or two 12-foot poles with pedestrian pendant lights should be added between roadway poles. The

pendant lights should extend over the sidewalk, positioned below the mature tree canopy to maximize the illumination of the public realm.

Pedestrian-scale Light Fixture:	Selux, Beta Pendant LED with pole mount fitter or single arm as appropriate (see Figure 5.16).
Color:	RAL 5008 dark slate blue
Lighting Analysis:	Scoping, funding, and implementation of street improvement projects should include a lighting analysis of existing lighting conditions within the project area so that lighting improvements can be implemented as part of the project where feasible.
Lighting Levels:	The recommended light levels in Table 5.2 below are informed by lighting standards from other Bay Area cities and can be revised through technical analysis and future development of citywide standards.

Table 5.2 Recommended Light Levels

LOCATION	MINIMUM		OPTIMUM ¹	
	Illuminance (footcandles)	Uniformity Ratio (avg. to min.)	Illuminance (footcandles)	Uniformity Ratio (avg. to min.)
San Pablo Avenue, Gilman Street, University Avenue, and Ashby Avenue	1.5	3:1	2.5	2:1
Hopkins Street, Cedar Street, and Dwight Way with C-SP frontage	1.1	4:1	1.8	3:1
Other streets in Specific Plan Area	0.8	6:1	1.2	4:1
Transit Areas²	2.0	3:1	3.0	2:1

Notes:

1. When installed or until end of maximum lighting with smart lighting systems.
2. On both sides of the street within one block of bus stops on San Pablo Avenue, Gilman Street, University Avenue, and Ashby Avenue, and within one-half block on both sides of the street for bus stops on other Specific Plan Area streets.

Smart Lighting Systems

The City should pursue grants and other funding to implement a smart lighting system on San Pablo Avenue and throughout the Specific Plan Area to maximize the utility and efficiency of the street and public realm lighting. Smart lighting systems allow for centralized control and management of lighting. Lighting levels can be programmed and automatically adjusted based on time of day, season, ambient light level sensors, motion detectors, and other relevant factors. These systems also monitor the condition and performance of lighting equipment, improving lighting management, energy efficiency, and maintenance.

Landscaping

The mature street tree canopy and landscaped medians of San Pablo and University Avenues are defining features of these streets' visual identity. The community views these as valued assets giving the streets their unique character (see Figure 5.17). However, the tree canopy is inconsistent, with noticeable gaps and maintenance issues affecting both trees and tree wells. Beyond the median landscaping, public landscaping is limited. In some locations, adjacent property owners and tenants maintain landscape along their frontages, which sometimes narrows the available sidewalk width.

Many of the existing gaps and maintenance issues were identified previously in the 2004 San Pablo Avenue Public Improvement Plan. Since then, some improvements have been made through private initiative or targeted City investments, but funding constraints have limited the extent of implementation. The Plan builds on these earlier recommendations to shape future public realm improvements.

Since 2004, landscape standards and requirements have evolved to reflect new priorities. These include new irrigation standards, and requirements for landscaping that captures and treats stormwater runoff from development and street projects. Current best practices emphasize water-efficient plant selection and species that can thrive under global climate change impacts, such as changes to local rainfall, higher average temperatures, and other factors. The Plan updates those outlined in the 2004 Improvement Plan to reflect these practices.

Additional policies, standards, and implementation strategies address the issues of capital, maintenance cost and responsibilities for landscaping within the Specific Plan Area.



Figure 5.18 Examples of Tree Canopy along San Pablo Avenue

Left: Mature street trees grew to the same height as this four-story mixed-use building. Right: Median trees contribute to the canopy cover. Photos by CD+A

PR-P.4 Enhance Street Tree Health and Expand Tree Canopy

Existing street trees should be well maintained, and their positive impact on the public realm should be enhanced by planting additional trees and other landscaping. Establishing a consistent and continuous tree canopy along sidewalks and medians will strengthen the Specific Plan Area's character, improve pedestrian comfort, help to reduce urban heat island effect, and address the community's desire for a greener environment.

Tree Canopy: The tree canopy should be as continuous as possible with mature tree canopies touching those of adjacent trees. Breaks will occur at roadway street light locations. Pedestrian-scale lighting is to be installed below the mature tree canopy to minimize conflicts.

Street tree planting will follow the City of Berkeley standards, including tree well modifications described below.

Tree wells:

Tree wells should be as large as feasible and meet the minimum size standards for San Pablo Avenue (PR-S.3), University Avenue (PR-S.4), and other side-street trees (PR-S.5) below. These tree well standards supplement the citywide Tree Planting Location Standards as applied within the Specific Plan Area. Maximizing tree well size supports the long-term tree health and allows for additional plantings. The following is a summary of tree well surface treatments:

- **Flexible porous pavement** should be used along San Pablo Avenue, University Avenue within C-SP, at Designated Nodes, and within proximity to bus stops and other high pedestrian activity areas. This material allows water and oxygen to reach the soil and roots to provide for better tree health, while the pavement surface provides a level, walkable and ADA compliant surface (see Figure 5.19).
- **Gravel mulch** should be used in all other tree wells along with other plantings to enhance visual interest. See PR-S.6 *Landscaping in Tree Wells and Planters*, below for further discussion.



Figure 5.19 Flexible Porous Pavement
Downtown Berkeley Tree Well.
Photo by CD+A

PR-S.3 San Pablo Avenue Tree Standards

Some of the most comfortable and engaging blocks along San Pablo Avenue feature large, mature trees in the sidewalks and medians that form a full tree canopy across the street. This canopy creates a human scaled streetscape (see Figure 5.18). As taller buildings are built along San Pablo Avenue, expanding the street tree canopy will soften the perceived scale of these structures, enhance the character of the public realm and provide meaningful urban greening.

Tree species:

The predominant tree species along San Pablo Avenue are London Plane (*Platanus x acerifolia*, see Figure 5.20), Western Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), American Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), and Red Sunset Red Maple (*Acer rubrum* 'Franksred'). Other trees and smaller tree species are also present. However, several trees, particularly the American Sweet Gums, are in decline or poor condition. While Ginkgo biloba trees have also been planted, they tend to grow slowly and do not achieve the desired large and rounded form.

- London Plane trees should be prioritized for new plantings and when existing trees are replaced.
- To avoid a monoculture of tree species, different cultivars such as 'Exclamation' and 'Columbia', which can grow wide and up to 50 feet tall can be planted. Western Sycamore is another alternative to support more diversity of tree species.
- In locations where these species are not suitable, as determined by the City forestry staff, a deciduous tree similar to the London Plane in height and canopy width should be selected. Red Maple trees are one example with appropriate cultivars and some Red Sunset Maples are already planted along San Pablo Avenue.
- If tree size is the limiting factor, a tree that will reach the largest possible size given the specific location conditions should be selected, and tree spacing should be adjusted to maintain a more continuous tree canopy.



Figure 5.20 Trees along Sidewalk
Sidewalk on San Pablo Avenue
South of University Avenue.
Photo by CD+A

Trees in Medians: The size and placement of trees in San Pablo Avenue’s medians are governed by the Caltrans Highway Design Manual and other Caltrans Standards. The full-width medians along San Pablo Avenue are typically 13 feet wide. Caltrans Standards require a minimum clearance of five feet from median curb face to the tree trunk of a mature tree. The trees recommended above satisfy this requirement.

Tree Wells: The predominant size of existing tree wells along San Pablo Avenue is 3 x 3 feet and undersized for large canopy trees (see Figure 5.21).

- A minimum size of 4 x 6 feet is required for new wells, with the longer dimension oriented parallel to the curb. (See *PR-S.1 Sidewalk Zone Standards* for minimum Amenity Zone width requirements.)
- Where possible, a 4 x 8 feet tree well is desirable.
- The 4-foot minimum can be increased where the Amenity Zone width allows, consistent with Policy *PR-S.1 Sidewalk Zone Standards*.
- See Policy *PR-P.4 Enhance Tree Health and Expand Tree Canopy* for tree well surface treatments and *PR-S.6 Landscaping in Tree Wells and Planters* for landscaping.



Figure 5.21 Tree on San Pablo Avenue

Overgrowing a 3-Foot by 3-Foot Tree Well. Photo by CD+A

PR-S.4 University Avenue Tree Standards

On University Avenue within the Specific Plan Area, sidewalks are ten feet wide, narrower than those along San Pablo Avenue. The median between 10th Street and San Pablo Avenue contains an extended left-turn lane and only one tree.

Tree Species and Spacing: Existing trees along this section of University Avenue are of various species. Chinese Elm trees (*Ulmus parvifolia*, *Ulmus* ‘Frontier’ and other varieties) are most common, accompanied by Tulip trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) and Honey Locusts (*Gleditsia triacanthos*). Many trees are in poor health. Elm trees with a large, mature vase-shaped form, such as Allee Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia* ‘Emer ll’), should be prioritized for replacement and new plantings. As tree health is evaluated, new trees should be added to create a continuous tree canopy with a spacing that allows mature tree canopies to touch those of adjacent trees.

Trees in Medians: The medians are planted with various California natives. Coast Live Oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) have performed the best, while California Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*) and Blue Blossom Ceanothus (*Ceanothus thyrsiflorus*) are in poorer condition. Narrow, medium-sized, drought-tolerant deciduous oaks, such as Chisos Red Oak (*Quercus gravesii*) or Spanish Oak (*Quercus cerrioides*) should be used as replacement species.

Tree Wells: The predominant size of existing tree wells along this part of University Avenue is three x three feet and undersized for large canopy trees.

- The minimum size of 4 x 6 feet is required for new wells, with the longer dimension oriented parallel to the curb.
- Where possible, a 4 x 8 feet tree well is desirable.
- Given the narrower typically 10-foot sidewalk width along University Avenue the tree wells should use flexible porous pavement in order to provide the desired 6-foot minimum width for the sidewalk’s Pedestrian Zone that meets universal access design considerations.
- See Policy *PR-P.4 Enhance Tree Health and Expand Tree Canopy* for more details about tree well surface treatments and *PR-S.6 Landscaping in tree wells and planters* for landscaping.

PR-S.5 Other Side-Street Trees

A wide variety of tree species are planted on streets intersecting San Pablo Avenue. The following design standards apply to those portions of the intersecting streets, except for University Avenue, within the Specific Plan Area. For

University Avenue, see *PR-S.4 University Avenue Tree Standards* above.

Tree Species Should match the following type and spacing, except where deemed infeasible under the citywide Tree Planting Location Standards:

- Outside of Designated Nodes, side-street trees adjacent to properties that front or side onto San Pablo Avenue should match the species planted on the adjoining block face of San Pablo Avenue.
- In Designated Nodes, street trees should match the adjacent San Pablo Avenue species for the length of the sidewalk that is within the Specific Plan Area.
- If San Pablo Avenue tree species are infeasible, trees should match the predominant species already established along the side-street.

Tree Wells: Sidewalk widths vary alongside-streets, resulting in different tree well sizes.

- A minimum tree well size of 4 x 6 feet, as defined for San Pablo Avenue, is preferred.
- Where sidewalks widths are too narrow to provide both a 6-foot-wide Pedestrian Zone with a 4-foot-wide tree well, the tree wells width is reduced in size or surfaced with flexible porous pavement in compliance with the citywide Tree Planting Location Standards. This pavement allows the Pedestrian Zone to overlap the tree well.
- *PR-P.4 Enhance Tree Health and Expand Tree Canopy* for more details about tree well materials and *PR-S.6 Landscaping in tree wells and planters* for landscaping.

PR-P.5 Enhance and Expand Other Landscaping

Beyond street trees, the landscape character of the Specific Plan Area is defined by other plantings in the medians and some street tree wells (see Figure 5.22), and other small areas of plantings along the sidewalk. As the Plan is implemented, additional opportunities for landscaping arise in new curb extensions, partial and full side-street plazas (see *PR-P.15 Create Side-Street Plazas*), planters in the sidewalk Amenities and Frontage Zones, and in privately-owned public open spaces (see *PR-P.19 Privately Owned Public Open Spaces*).

In the future, should a community benefit or business improvement district form within a portion of the Specific Plan Area, the organization should negotiate an agreement with the City to improve and maintain landscaping within the sidewalk, median, and other landscaped areas within the public right-of-way. See *ED-P.5 Study Feasibility of Forming a Business Improvement District (BID) or Community Benefit District (CBD)*.



Figure 5.22 Additional Landscape in Large Tree Well On San Pablo Avenue. Photo: By CD+A

PR-S.6 Landscaping in Tree Wells and Planters

Where tree wells do not need to be filled with flexible porous pavement, tree wells can be planted to create a distinct identity for locations along San Pablo Avenue (see Figure 5.22).

Plantings in tree wells, except for the tree itself, will not be maintained by the City. Tree wells with landscape planting need to be maintained by adjacent property owners, residents, businesses, tenants, or a future community benefit or business improvement district.

Planting of a tree well must comply with the Specific Plan standards and the requirements of the Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 12.44 *Trees and Shrubs*.

Plantings cannot impede public use of other sidewalk areas, such as adjacent Pedestrian and Amenity Zones.

Landscaping in medians

Full-width and narrow width landscaped medians are generally planted with grass and not irrigated along San Pablo Avenue. Narrow medians next to left turn lanes vary in conditions with some narrow medians having hedges, which were once a dominant treatment, but these have not been consistently replaced as they die or become damaged. Where narrow medians next to left-turn lanes have been modified, they have typically been paved with concrete.

Although the grass and tree treatment in the medians positively impact the character of San Pablo Avenue, during dryer times of the year the appearance of the grass deteriorates (see Figure 5.23). Maintaining green grass requires regular irrigation which is not environmentally appropriate, and existing irrigation systems are not currently in use. In addition, the grass requires regular mowing and other maintenance. A more sustainable and climate-resilient approach involves replacing grass over time with a low- water drought-tolerant landscape treatment that can adapt to climate change and not require irrigation after the plants are established.



Figure 5.23 Median Planting
On San Pablo Avenue. Photo
by CD+A

PR-P.6 Long-term Landscaped Median Design

In the long-term, landscape medians along San Pablo Avenue should be aesthetically pleasing, low-maintenance, and free of irrigation. The design should include a ground cover of crushed rock or wood mulch, with trees and low-water, drought-tolerant, low growing shrubs, grasses, succulents, and other plantings. Suitable species include mat rush (*Lomandra species*), California yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), aloe (*Aloe species*), finger aloe (*Cotyledon orbiculata* var. *oblonga* 'Flavida'), and Majorcan germander (*teucrium cosonii*). Berkeley's Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department will take a lead role in determining which plant species are most appropriate for long-term landscaping in medians.

PR-P.7 Near-term Opportunities for Re-landscaping Medians

When opportunities arise through transportation improvement projects, the City should replant sections of medians using landscape design treatments that reflect the long-term landscaped median design vision. These demonstration segments can help build support and establish precedent for larger future improvement projects.

Green Infrastructure

Transportation improvements and other construction within the Specific Plan Area that meet specific criteria must include green infrastructure consistent with the Caltrans NPDES Order 2022-0033-DWQ Stormwater Permit when within the Caltrans right of way of San Pablo Avenue and the Municipal Regional Stormwater NPDES Permit Order No. R2-2022-0018 (MRP 3.0) when in City right of way or private property. Green infrastructure is a sustainable landscape and civil engineering improvement that captures, slows, and treats stormwater runoff with a primary goal of reducing pollutants entering the San Francisco Bay.²⁹ Green infrastructure systems support Berkeley’s climate change and sustainability goals. The City’s [Green Infrastructure Plan \(2019\)](#) includes guidelines for implementation of green infrastructure in Berkeley and should be referred to during the planning and design phases of both streetscape improvement and private development projects in the Specific Plan Area.

PR-P.8 Green Infrastructure in Public Projects

All publicly funded projects must meet the requirements of the current MRP and/or the Caltrans NPDES permit as applicable. In addition to fulfilling the Specific Plan’s public realm policies and standards, green infrastructure should contribute positively to pedestrian comfort and safety.

Design:

- Approaches include permeable or porous pavement materials to maintain required sidewalk widths, and use of tree wells, and can be integrated into side-street curb extensions and side-street plazas if Caltrans and the City reach a maintenance agreement for specific improvements.
- See *T-P. 12 Minor Side-Street Intersection Improvements*, and *PR-P. 14 Create Side-Street Plazas* for design related policies and standards.

PR-P.9 Green Infrastructure in Private Development

Private development projects are required to meet the requirements of the current MRP. The Specific Plan supports and provides flexibility for private development to fund and integrate public spaces that serve dual purposes for stormwater management and the community.

Green infrastructure that serves to treat private property stormwater can be integrated into the public realm and can be included in side-street curb extensions, see *T-P. 12 Minor Side-Street Intersection Improvements*, or within *PR-P. 2 Sidewalk Easements*, *PR-P. 18 Privately Owned Public Open Spaces*, *PR-P. 15 Create Side-Street Plazas* for design related policies and standards

When a development constructs green infrastructure in the public right-of-way the property owner must enter into a maintenance agreement with the City. Then the improvement may be used towards the project’s stormwater compliance requirements with the concurrence of the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

²⁹ San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, [Stormwater webpage](#), accessed June 30, 2025.

Street Furniture

PR-S.7 Public Seating

Public seating will be installed within the Amenity Zone of the sidewalk or integrated into curb extensions, see *T-P.12 Minor Side-Street Intersection Improvements* and *PR-P.14 Create Side-Street Plazas*. Seating must not encroach into the Pedestrian Zone, which will remain clear as required in *PR-S.1 Sidewalk Zone Standards*. Public seating must provide wheelchair-accessible space per the requirements of current Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG). These standards are in addition to, not a replacement of, Berkeley Municipal Code 14.48.150 *Sidewalk Seating, Benches and Planters*.

Placement: Benches in the Furniture Zone should face away from the street. Alternatively, there may be pairs of short benches placed perpendicular to the street that face each other to allow for a small group gatherings.

Style:

- Benches provided and maintained by the City will be “[Landscape Forms Scarborough](#)” bench in black. This bench model is available in four standard lengths in both back or backless versions. These benches have been used in the Shattuck Avenue reconstruction project in Downtown Berkeley and other improvements in Berkeley. Using the same model on San Pablo Avenue will streamline City maintenance.
- Benches or other public seating installed and maintained by adjacent property owner or businesses may be a custom design or an alternative style. All seating and street furniture must be approved by the City through their sidewalk seating application process.³⁰ The applicant is responsible for installation and ongoing maintenance. Privately installed public seating must satisfy the requirements and guidance of PROWAG and other ADA requirements.
- Seating in curb extensions and side-street plazas can be integrated into planter walls that are part of green infrastructure systems, or consist of movable tables and chairs or other context-sensitive design.

Seating Types

Developments along San Pablo Avenue have introduced public-facing elements such as benches or seating areas within the ground floor setbacks. While located on private property, these spaces are accessible to the public.



Figure 5.24 Seating Options
Top: Seating Wall at 3000 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley. Bottom: Bench variations of Landscape Forms Scarborough bench in Downtown Berkeley. Photos by CD+A

³⁰ City of Berkeley. [Outdoor Commerce, Sidewalk Seating, and Parklets](#).

PR-S.8 Trash and Recycling Receptacles

City-standard trash and recycling receptacles will be placed in the sidewalk Amenity Zone or integrated into curb extensions on side-streets and side-street plazas.

- Style:** The color and design of public trash and recycling receptacles must follow the citywide standard and be Forms + Surfaces “Modified Urban Renaissance” (Figure 5.25) model with upper integrated recycler module in dark green color or approved equal.
- *PR-P.10 Privately Owned Public Open Spaces* will have adequate receptacles and can be of a different manufacture and model as they will be maintained by the property owner.

Placement:

- In Designated Nodes, where foot traffic and stores are more frequent, two (2) city-standard receptacles should be installed per intersection, on opposite sides of the street.
- Between Designated Nodes, one city-standard receptacle should be installed per block face. Consider placement at bus stops or locations where trash otherwise accumulates.
- Businesses, property owners, and future community benefit or business improvement districts may place and maintain trash and recycling receptacles in the public right of way if they have a maintenance agreement with the City.



Figure 5.25 Trash Receptacle

Photo by CD+A

PR-S.9 Bicycle Racks

Bicycle racks along streets in the Specific Plan Area will be placed in the Amenity Zone and meet the clearance and space standards outlined in the Berkeley Bicycle Plan, Appendix F.³¹

- Style:** All racks in the right-of-way must be a city-approved design, such as Figure 5.26. The color is black or galvanized as in other parts of the City.

Placement:

- The City offers a bike rack installation program to improve bicycle access to local businesses and destinations. Through this program, the City installs bike racks on sidewalks in commercial areas at no cost to property or business owners. Business owners and community members can request new bike racks in areas where demand exists, or existing bicycle parking is insufficient. The application procedures are [available on the City's website](#), under the section Bike Parking.
- Install bike racks at San Pablo Avenue intersections with bicycle facilities. Where a bicycle facility crosses a Major Street or a Collector Street in a Designated Node, City staff will evaluate expected use of the facility and implement a bicycle parking corral when appropriate. See *T-P.16 Bicycle Improvements*.
- Identify funding for installing bicycle parking corrals in 20-foot daylighting setback area of parking lanes, prioritizing locations in Designated Nodes and locations where streets with bicycle facilities intersect with San Pablo Avenue; corrals would be placed on San Pablo Avenue or the crossing street. See also *T-P.6 Implement Mobility Hub features in the University Avenue Node* regarding priority to install a bike corrals proximate to Addison Street Bike Boulevard.



Figure 5.26 Bicycle Rack

Photo by CD+A

³¹ City of Berkeley. Berkeley Bicycle Plan, [Appendix F Facility Design Toolbox](#). Adopted 2017, p. F-106

- Private development projects may install bike racks in the public right of way adjacent to their developments with approval of the Public Works Department.

PR-S.10 Raised Planters

Raised planters can enhance the streetscape by adding greenery and visual interest, providing a buffer from the roadway, and expressing community care for public space.

Placement:

- Raised planters as shown in Figure 5.27 may be used in the Frontage Zone, (see *PR-S.1 Sidewalk Zone Standards*). They cannot be used in the Amenity Zone, with exception to curb extensions, plazas, side-street plazas, and privately owned public open spaces, with planters edges offering opportunities for informal seating.
- Freestanding planter pots allow for flexible placement as single installations or groupings.
- All planters must be stable and secure to prevent tipping or shifting.
- Planters cannot encroach into the Pedestrian Zone and must maintain the sidewalk clearances specified in *PR-S.1 Sidewalk Zone Standards*.
- Planters have to maintain required clearances from the face of the curb.

Design:

- Planters and low walls cannot exceed 30 inches in height from sidewalk grade, and the combined height of planter and landscaping cannot exceed 36 inches above the sidewalk when within 20 feet of an intersection or 10 feet of a driveway to provide line of sight between pedestrians and vehicle drivers.



Figure 5.27 Planter Pots
in Front of 1443 San Pablo Avenue. Picture by CD+A, 2023

PR-P.10 Continue to Improve Bus Stops

To support use of bus transit along San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley and its agency partners, AC Transit and Alameda CTC, have been planning and building bus stop improvements. Improvements include new shelters, benches, lighting, and other improvements to adjacent intersections and crosswalks. Within the Specific Plan Area, bus stop improvements will be made as part of the San Pablo Avenue Safety Enhancement project. The improvements are focused on stops that are used by limited-stop bus routes. These efforts are achieving the goals of Berkeley's Transit-First Policy Implementation Plan (2022) and AC Transit's Bus Stop Furniture Guidelines (September 2022). In addition, improvements made in the Specific Plan Area have to treat ADA requirements as the minimum standards for accessibility and strive to achieve universal design for users with a broad range of abilities. (see *PR-P.13 Design for People of All Ages and Abilities*).

Berkeley and its agency partners should continue to identify improvements beyond those provided through the San Pablo Avenue Safety Enhancement project. This should include seeking funding to make improvements to bus stops from Heinz Street to the south along San Pablo Avenue that are compatible with potential



Figure 5.28 Bus Stop at the San Pablo Avenue and Dwight Way Intersection
Photo by CD+A, 2025

improvement that could be made by the Alameda CTC San Pablo Avenue Bus Lanes and Bike Lanes Project, rather than waiting for the Alameda CTC project to improve these bus stops. Other bus stops in the Specific Plan Area along San Pablo Avenue and those serving bus routes on crossing streets should also be assessed and improved as funding is identified.

Prioritization of bus stops to receive improvements should consider existing ridership and potential ridership growth based on nearby destinations and development that brings new residents to the area, as well as the current condition or absence of bus stop improvements.

Improvements:

- Benches and other seating should be prioritized when improving bus stops as part of the universal design approach to Specific Plan Area improvements.
- Other potential improvements include installation of shelters, pedestrian lighting, maps, signage, emergency call systems, and street tree plantings for additional shade.
- Other features and fixtures identified in Berkeley’s *Transit-First Policy Implementation Plan* (2022) and AC Transit’s *Bus Stop Furniture Guidelines* (September 2022) should also be considered.

Berkeley and AC Transit should collaborate to identify and determine bus shelter models that provide weather protection and a safe and comfortable environment for waiting transit riders at bus stops while being practical to maintain.

PR-P.11 Other Street Furnishings

Additional public street furnishings, such as public restrooms or information kiosks, will be installed in the right-of-way where an identified need exists. These furnishings must be designed and located in accordance with the *PR-P.1 Sidewalk Zones* and all other applicable standards and policies in this document.

Wayfinding, Placemaking and Public Art

PR-P.12 Facilitate Wayfinding and Placemaking Programs

As development occurs in the Specific Plan Area and pedestrian and business activity grows implementing coordinated signage, banners, and public art can support navigating the area, reinforce local identities and highlight distinct places in the Specific Plan Area.

- The City's Office of Economic Development should work with existing business organizations or clusters, such as the Berkeley International Marketplace to facilitate installation of signs, banners, public art, and similar elements to support placemaking efforts, see Policy *ED-P.4 Support and Expand Existing Business Clusters*.
- Developers and businesses are encouraged to collaborate with artists, museums, and galleries to provide storefront display areas for art and craft installations. This strategy can provide privacy for businesses, and create visual interest even when a storefront is vacant. (See **San Pablo Avenue Design Standards Document: Ground-Floor Design**, for requirements).
- Wayfinding opportunities that reflect distinct character areas for business clusters or Designated Nodes should be identified, and coordinated branded approaches across San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley should be explored. In the near-term, these could be funded by a combination of the City and local business groups.
- Public art should be incorporated into wayfinding design to reflect local character, history, and destinations.
- Once community benefit and/or business improvement district(s) form in the Specific Plan Area, these organizations should take on a larger role in managing and expanding wayfinding efforts. See Policy *ED-P.5 Study the Feasibility of Forming a Business Improvement District (BID) or Community Benefit District (CBD)*.

Examples of Art in the Public Realm

Wall art and window displays are two approaches to activating building facades. The façade of Ashkenaz at 1317 San Pablo Avenue features a business-funded mural, demonstrating how individual businesses can contribute to the visual character of the street. The Milvia Window Display at 2100 Milvia Street offers a different model, hosting rotating exhibitions funded through the Kala Art Institute, while the space behind the display functions as a private office, which illustrates how activation can be achieved without compromising the interior use of a space.



Figure 5.29 Examples of Visible Art in the Public Realm

Left: Ashkenaz at 1317 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley. Photo by CD+A, 2023. Right: 2100 Milvia Street, Berkeley. Photo from Kala Institute, kala.org. Accessed April 2026

PR-P.13 Facilitate Installation of Public Art that Benefits the Public Realm

San Pablo Avenue currently features a range of informal and formal public art that create or reflect historic, demographic or commercial identities for Specific Plan Area segments. Community input expressed support for more public art to enrich the public realm and strengthen the Specific Plan Area's sense of place. For design standards that apply within the Specific Plan Area, see the **San Pablo Avenue Design Standards Document**, Public Art.

Public art should be integrated into public spaces throughout the Specific Plan Area to enhance the pedestrian experience and reflect the community's character and culture.

The process for incorporating art in public spaces is governed by [Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 6.13 Visual Art in Public Places](#), and is administered by the Civic Art Commission and Civic Arts Coordinator.

Opportunities for public installations include public infrastructure projects (as funding allows), existing medians and sidewalks (with specific public art funding), and within the public right of way through partnerships with adjacent property owners, businesses, and community development or business improvement districts (see *ED-P.5 Study Feasibility and Scope of Forming a Business Improvement District (BID) or Community Benefit District (CBD)*).

Public art proposed within San Pablo Avenue's right-of-way, which includes medians, street murals, or sidewalks, requires review and approval by Caltrans. This includes obtaining an encroachment permit, and a maintenance agreement between the City and Caltrans. This process adds time and cost.

Future community benefit or business improvement district(s) are also encouraged to integrate art into their marketing and identity programs. This could include art installations in the public realm with maintenance agreements with the City.

Cultural programming and community art events should be promoted along the street by supporting flexible gathering and event spaces that can host a wide range of activities. Such events should complement existing programming, expand the diversity of event types, and attract both local residents and visitors. Cultural events can help activate the public realm, strengthen its identity, and foster a more vibrant and inclusive public realm.

Examples of public art installations in Berkeley

Temporary and permanent art installations demonstrate the potential for integrating public art into the Specific Plan Area's streetscape. A temporary installation produced through the Berkeley Art Project on Heinz Street creates visual interest on the sidewalk. At the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Addison Street, the permanent sculpture shows how commissioned public art can serve as a landmark.



Figure 5.30 Public Art Installations
 Top: Temporary art installation by Amrita Singhal. Photo by CD+A, 2023.
 Bottom: Sculpture *Delivered, Mable's Promissory Note*; 2024 by Milred Howard. Photo by Ethan Kaplan

Universal Design

PR-P.14 Design for People of All Ages and Abilities

The Specific Plan Area’s public realm has to be designed, implemented, maintained, and operated to serve people of all ages, sizes, and abilities. Universal design approaches apply to promote inclusive access to streets, sidewalks, open spaces, and transit.

At a minimum, all improvements must comply with the Federal Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations.

The Specific Plan prioritizes accessibility improvements that are proximate to senior housing and other uses frequently visited by individuals with a range of abilities.

When public realm improvements are being programmed and designed, the City, developer, and/or other project sponsors should consult with accessibility advocates and organizations serving people with access and functional needs to guide priorities and ensure inclusive design.

Elements

Universal design strategies beyond minimum requirements include:

- Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS)³², Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPIs)³³ and extended pedestrian signal phases to maximize crossing time.
- Use of tactile detectable warning surfaces, in addition to typical truncated dome panels at crosswalks. These additional warning surfaces should be used when blind/low-vision people may experience unusual circulation conditions in the public right-of-way. Use of these materials should be discussed in consultation with accessibility stakeholders during the design of public realm improvements in the public realm.
- Use of tactile detectable surfaces to guide circulation is an evolving practice in the United States and designers of improvements in Berkeley and City staff who review them need to stay informed about current best practices and design guidance from the state, MTC, transit agencies, and adjacent jurisdictions.
- Passenger loading zones and accessible parking near senior and mixed-use housing meet and, where possible, exceed PROWAG and ADA regulations.

³² City of Berkeley. [Pedestrian Plan Appendix B: Toolbox of Pedestrian Improvements](#). Adopted 2020, p. 16

³³ City of Berkeley. [Pedestrian Plan Appendix B: Toolbox of Pedestrian Improvements](#). Adopted 2020, p. 17

Public Realm Expansion and Improvements

As noted in **Appendix A: Key Existing Conditions**, the Specific Plan Area lacks public parks or plazas³⁴, and the streets and sidewalks are the only public spaces at the time of Specific Plan adoption. As new homes are built in the Specific Plan Area, demand on the public realm will grow, since it functions as the primary social space for the people living, working and shopping in the area. During community outreach, residents and business owners expressed a strong desire for shared spaces that bring people together, support street-level business and community activity. In addition to opportunities for sidewalk widening (see *PR-P.2 Sidewalk Easements*), **the Specific Plan encourages a variety of new public spaces**, including:

- Corner plazas at University Avenue to highlight the intersection as a major entry point into Berkeley from the highway.
- Plazas in Designated Nodes and near (rapid) transit stops.
- Adaptive reuse of parking lots as outdoor spaces that allow for community interaction.
- Mini-plazas in the public right-of-way created through full or partial side-street closures.
- Flexible spaces between sidewalks and adjacent buildings that can be used for seating, planting, and gathering.
- Side-street parklets and curb extensions used for public space and/or outdoor dining.

The following policies and standards offer strategies to expand the public realm and support the development of new public spaces. In the near term, improvements can be made through pavement-to-park initiatives like adaptive reuse of parking lots, parklets and side-street entry closures. Over the long term, opportunities include curb extensions and side-street plazas, public open space and privately owned public open spaces (POPOS) mini-parks, and mid-block pedestrian passages can provide lasting enhancements to the public realm.

San Pablo Avenue’s designation as a state highway limits opportunities for its closure for street festivals. For special events or any activity within the State highway right-of-way an Encroachment Permit³⁵ with an extensive approval process is required. However, events and neighborhood gatherings have taken place on side-streets, see sidebar.

Festival Street Closure

Until the end of 2024, the non-profit cultural organization Brasarte, which is dedicated to preserving Brazilian arts and culture in the Bay Area, was located on San Pablo Avenue at the Casa de la Cultura. Each year, for their celebration of SF Bay Brazilian Day & Lavagem Festival, they organized a street closure adjacent to their building, closing a block of Hearst Street and activating an adjacent parking lot for festivities.



Figure 5.31 SF Bay Brazilian Day & Lavagem Festival in 2023
Photos by CD+A, Sept. 2023

³⁴ Codornices Creek Park is a small property at the northern end of the Specific Plan Area that has not been fully developed as of the adoption of the Plan and it is not directly accessible from San Pablo Avenue.

³⁵ California Department of Transportation. [Local Development Review and Encroachment Permit Process](#). 2025

Adaptive Reuse of Parking Lots

Along 4th St in Long Beach, CA, a placemaking study created a framework for opportunities to activate the pedestrian realm. An idea of “bulb-ins” created pilot plaza spaces at the edge of parking lots that fronted the sidewalk. There is one plaza at the corner of a parking lot that is permanent; see Figure 5.32. The bulb-in concept provides an idea of the types of spaces and activation that are possible with underutilized parcels and parking lots along a commercial corridor.

For a number of years, the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association has hosted ‘Concerts in the Park(in Lot)’ which is a free series of early evening concerts/dances that take place in a portion of a commercial shopping center’s parking lot people can get food from surrounding restaurants and enjoy the concerts. These events are similar to performances in the Berkeley Downtown Plaza on Shattuck Avenue



Figure 5.32 Examples of Adaptive Reuse of Parking Lots

Left: Parking Lot “bulb-in” open space, 4th Street, Long Beach. Right: Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association, 2023. Photo by bixbyknollsinfo.com.

PR-P.15 Create Side-Street Plazas

The City will explore opportunities to convert minor streets into small side-street plazas by limiting or removing vehicle access between San Pablo Avenue and these streets. These closures create room for public gathering spaces, urban greening and green infrastructure improvements. Potential locations include side-streets that extend only a few blocks east or west from San Pablo Avenue, or streets that intersect where San Pablo Avenue does not have a vehicular median break. See Figure 5.33.

Goal: Side-street plazas create true public space that is accessible, welcoming, and usable by all members of the public.

Access: The plazas can be designed to close vehicle access entirely or only allow one-way entry or exit. To ensure adequate emergency access, the Fire Department shall be included as a principal and early partner on location selection and design, and final design will be subject to approval by the Fire Department, Public Works, and Caltrans as appropriate. Access requirements must be determined in coordination with the City departments and must allow emergency vehicle and refuse vehicle access, provide maneuvering space for private vehicles on the side-street to turn around, and maintain pedestrian and bicycle access to ensure neighborhood connectivity. Limited access for large vehicles such as moving vans can be accommodated as needed. Site and use specific conditions will be assessed during the scoping and design of each plaza, such as side-street commercial loading, and ability of parallel streets to provide for vehicle access to the uses on the side-street. The design also must provide necessary property access along the side-streets.

Design: Side-street plaza design responds to the needs and character of the surrounding neighborhood and community. Plazas should incorporate lighting, furnishings, play elements, landscaping, surface treatments, and public art or community-generated art to create an active, comfortable, and visually engaging space.

- Edge treatments shall be placed along the perimeter of the plaza to clearly define the public space from vehicular and bicycle access and to provide a protective buffer for plaza users. These elements should be tall enough to be visible to motorists, yet not so large that pedestrians are obscured or otherwise unable to see motorists.
- The space must be designed to comply with *PR-P.14 Design for People of All Ages and Abilities*.

In the near-term, the City can partner with non-profits, businesses and neighborhood advocacy groups, and other community organizations to identify pilot locations for quick-build plaza projects. These should be prioritized where local community partners will use, program, or activate the plaza space.

- Quick-build treatments can include barriers (e.g., jersey barriers, stone blocks or planters), pavement markings identifying the plaza space with striping and paint, and tables with seating of different types. Also, boulders, logs, or small structures can be installed to engage children in informal play.

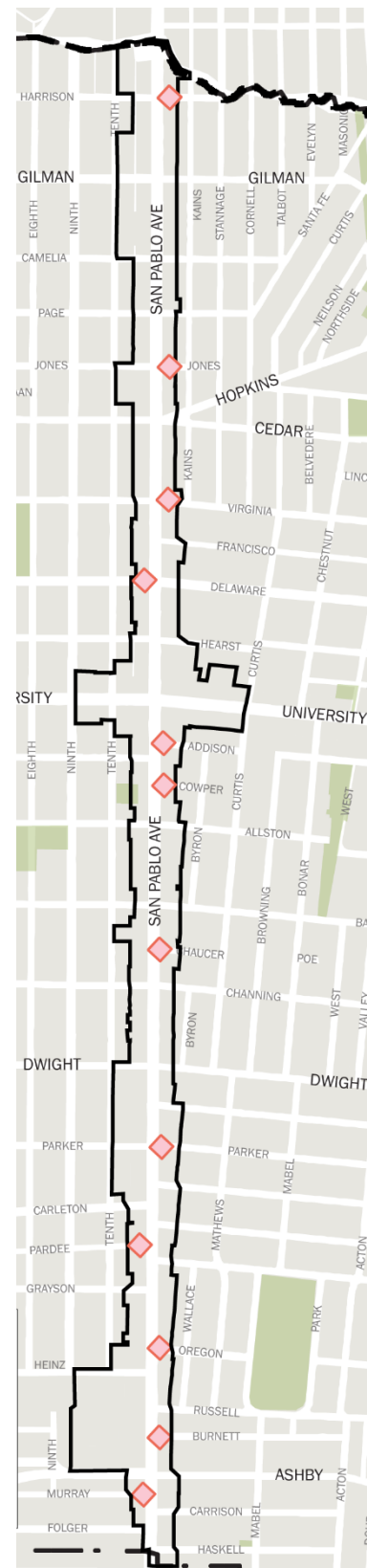


Figure 5.33 Map of Potential Side-Street Plaza Locations

Source: City of Berkeley, CD+A

In the long-term, when funding is available and where community support in activating a side-street plaza is strong, permanent plaza improvements should be pursued. A reconstruction of the street space provides additional opportunities for improving and activating the plaza.

Permanent designs must incorporate durable, high-quality materials, and include any of the following amenities:

- paving that smoothly transitions with sidewalk grade;
- permanent seating and tables, or moveable seating and tables if managed by a future business improvement district or adjacent business or property manager;
- landscaped areas including trees;
- edge definition with seat walls, planters, and/or safety features, such as bollards;
- pedestrian scale lighting;
- elements that engage people in activities, such as play and exercise elements for children and adults; and
- other elements suggested by community members during the design process.

Implementation:

There are several ways that a side-street plaza could be created, operated, and maintained.

- **City-Community Partnership:** Local groups of residents, businesses, and/or property owners may reach out to the City and work with the Office of Economic Development (OED) and the Public Works Department to identify funding for design, approval, and construction. The community can take an active role in ongoing maintenance and programming of the plaza.
- **Future community benefit or business improvement district:** They will take a leadership role and partner with the City and adjacent community, to manage and maintain the plaza, under a



Figure 5.34 Sunset Triangle Quick-Build Plaza
Photo by LADOT



Figure 5.35 Street Closed to Vehicles and Converted into a Plaza
With Bicycle and Emergency Vehicle Pass-Through, Vancouver Street/ McClure Street, Victoria, BC. Image from Google maps, Nov. 2022.

formal agreement with the City, similar to how the Downtown BART Plaza or the plaza space in Strawberry Creek Park is managed (see ED-4. *Study Feasibility of Forming a Business Improvement District or Community Benefit District (CBD)*).

- **Adjacent Development:** A property owner or property manager of a new residential or mixed-use building adjacent to the plaza may design and build a side-street plaza to receive development credits (see LU-S.3 *Side-Street Plaza Incentive*).
- **Infrastructure Improvement Projects:** Future infrastructure improvement projects should include side-street plazas as a strategy for traffic calming,

Parklets and Curb Extension Common Spaces

Though smaller in scale than side-street plazas, parklets and curb extensions offer opportunities to create community gathering areas, outdoor commerce areas and streetscape landscaping within the public right-of-way. Opportunities for these types of spaces include smaller parklets along the commercial frontages on the southside of Dwight Way on either side of San Pablo Avenue, as well as a larger potential gathering space on the east side of San Pablo Avenue at the Hopkins Street and Cedar Street merge, where intersection reconfiguration could create a more usable and inviting public area.

PR-P.16 Support Use and Creation of Parklets

Parklets are allowed on San Pablo Avenue but must follow strict design criteria set by the Caltrans Encroachment Permits Manual. They must also be publicly accessible, be applied for and maintained by the City, and cannot serve as semi-private spaces, such as exclusive outdoor seating for restaurants or cafés. Permits for parklets are limited to one year, and extensions are not guaranteed, adding to the uncertainty of long-term use.³⁶

Side-streets, including Gilman Street, Cedar/Hopkins Street, University Avenue, Dwight Way, and Ashby Avenue, however, provide opportunities for parklets to support outdoor seating and dining for nearby businesses. This approach can enhance corner locations, making them more appealing for restaurants and cafés, thereby boosting business activity and economic vitality while providing the public with valued common space. Preferred locations include Designated Nodes and areas prioritized for pedestrian safety improvements (see Figure 5.7). Parklets could also be used to pilot a side-street plaza (see PR-P. 15).

The City administers a parklet program³⁷, and reviews applications for compliance with standards such as location, design, and use, which are codified in Berkeley Municipal Code Sections 14.48.190 *Parklets* and 14.48.150 *Sidewalk seating, benches, and planters*.

Incentive: To support business activity within the Specific Plan Area, the yearly Outdoor Commerce Use Fee will be waived for businesses using free parking spaces and reduced by 75 percent for those using paid parking spaces upon application. Evaluate incentive after first three years of implementation and revise as appropriate.

PR-P.17 Design and Use of Curb Extensions

Curb extensions (also called bulb-outs) extend the sidewalk into the parking lane to narrow the roadway, shorten pedestrian crossing distances, and slow turning vehicles.

Placement: New curb extensions will primarily be located on side-street corners along San Pablo or University Avenues and extend only into the side-street parking lane in order to preserve flexibility for potential multimodal improvements to these streets.

³⁶ California Department of Transportation. [Encroachment Permits Manual](#). Section 500.3I, "Parklets," July 2021, pp. 5-12

³⁷ City of Berkeley, Doing Business, Operating Berkeley, Outdoor Commerce Sidewalk Seating and Parklets. [Outdoor Commerce, Sidewalk Seating, and Parklets | City of Berkeley](#)

The Alameda CTC Safety Enhancements project designs bus curb extensions at select locations on San Pablo Avenue. For these locations and future bus stop curb extension projects, the City should assess whether added space can accommodate outdoor seating or other placemaking efforts when a curb extension primarily enhances transit service. This is similar to the “buslet” concept that has been implemented in two locations on Solano Avenue in Albany.

Potential curb extensions should be evaluated for feasibility in terms of private vehicle, truck, and emergency vehicle turn movements.

Use:

Curb extensions can be used in the public realm for a variety of associated improvements:

- Street Trees on San Pablo or University Avenues should be planted behind the original curb line to allow flexibility for future multimodal improvements (See *Street Trees*, this chapter);
- Landscaping opportunities such as Green Infrastructure can be implemented on side streets (See *Landscaping*, this chapter);
- Pedestrian-Realm Lighting on San Pablo or University Avenues should be located behind the original curb line to provide flexibility for future multimodal improvements (see *PR-P.3 Improve Street Lighting for the Safety and Comfort for all Users*);
- Outdoor seating (see Figure 5.36) or dining (see *PR-P. 18 Commercial and Other Private Use of Sidewalks and the Public Realm*); and
- Public art in public spaces on San Pablo or University Avenues should be located behind the original curb line or be relocatable in order to provide flexibility for future multimodal improvements.



Figure 5.36 Curb Extensions with Seating and Planters
At University Avenue and Kala Bagai Way. Photo by CD+A

Standard:

Similar to side-street plazas, see *PR-P. 15 Create Side-Street Plazas*, a developer or property owner of a new building adjacent to a side-street identified in Figure 5.33 may propose to design, construct and activate a curb extension.

- The location and design of any curb extension must approved by the Public Works Department.
- Requirements of BMC Section 14.48.150 *Sidewalk seating, benches, and planters* apply to these curb extensions.
- This space shall be maintained through an agreement with the City.

Incentive:

To encourage construction of curb extensions and activation of the common space, Sidewalk Seating Permit fees that would otherwise result from commercial use of the curb extension space will be waived for up to 10 years for the first commercial seating use of the space.

Sidewalk and Other Public Realm Activation

PR-P.18 Commercial and Other Private Use of Sidewalks and the Public Realm

While side-street plazas, parklets, and curb extensions focus on enhancing side-streets adjacent to San Pablo Avenue, the sidewalk frontage, particularly along San Pablo Avenue, offers opportunities for activation through seating, landscaping and small gathering spaces.

The requirements of BMC Section 14.48.150 *Sidewalk seating, benches, and planters* apply to commercial and other private use of the sidewalk.

As discussed in *PR-P.2 Sidewalk Incentive*, new developments may expand the useable sidewalk space on San Pablo Avenue and other streets in the Specific Plan Area.

Incentive: In these cases, the Outdoor Commerce Fee for the commercial use of the sidewalk is waived for up to 10 years from the date of first commercial seating use.

Pocket Parks and Plazas Along San Pablo Avenue

There are no publicly owned park, plazas, or other community spaces located along San Pablo Avenue. There is one park (George Florence Park) partially within the Specific Plan Area. Kains Avenue Park, located at the north end of the Specific Plan Area along Cordonices Creek is not yet open to the public. However, several parks, including George Florence Park, James Kenney Park, Strawberry Creek Park, and San Pablo Park are located within a few blocks (see Figure 5.10. *Street Network Map*).

Community feedback throughout the planning process emphasized a strong desire for accessible public open space along San Pablo Avenue. In the absence of dedicated public open space, a variety of semi-public spaces or “third places” have emerged organically. These include outdoor seating at restaurants and cafes, and the use of gas stations or paved areas by food trucks and trailers with temporary seating (See Figure 5.37).



Figure 5.37 Example of a Food Truck Using a Parking Lot
Photo by CD+A

PR-P.19 Purchase Underutilized Small Properties for Public Open Space

Several small and underutilized properties within the Specific Plan Area could, over time, have the potential for public acquisition and could be developed as public parks or plazas. The Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department should seek funding to purchase property along San Pablo Avenue for the purpose of developing new public parks or plazas. A potential funding mechanism is a potential Nexus Study to Support Citywide Park and Open Space Funding (See **Chapter 6 Administration and Implementation**). This study could include an evaluation of public park space needs in the Specific Plan Area and identify opportunities to qualify for priority funding.

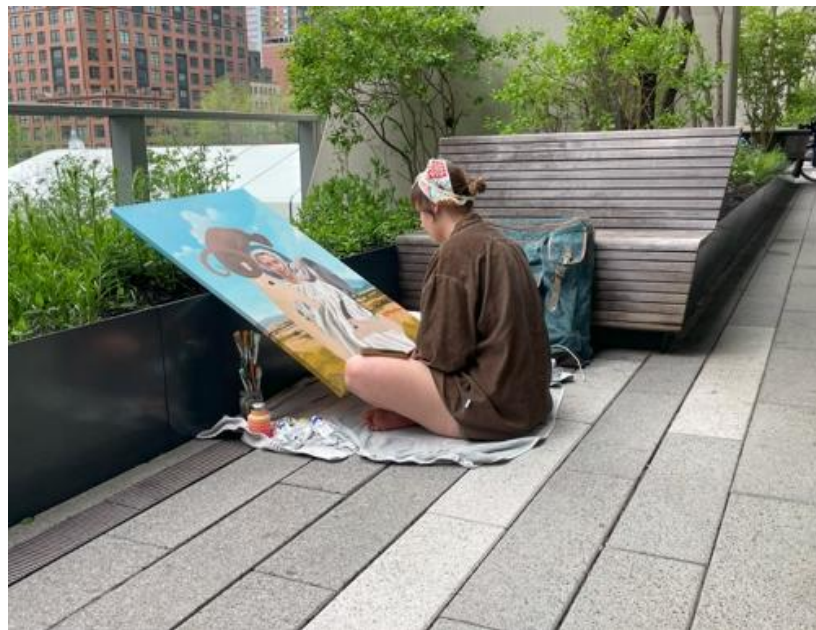
PR-P.20 Privately Owned Public Open Spaces

An important strategy to create public open space within the Specific Plan Area is to encourage and incentivize the development of privately-owned public open spaces (POPOS). POPOS are publicly accessible open spaces that are built and maintained on private property. They can come in many forms, e.g., plazas, courtyards, recreational facilities, play areas, dog parks and usable green space; see Figure 5.38. Key benefit of POPOS is that the construction and maintenance costs are typically the responsibility of the private developer, rather than the City. These spaces are encouraged in new non-residential, multi-family, and mixed-use developments, and they also present an opportunity to transform existing parking lots or underutilized properties into open areas for the public.

LU-S.2 Privately Owned Public Open Space within the Designated Nodes Incentive, further encourages POPOS as part of new mixed-use residential development projects in a Designated Node in the Specific Plan Area. This land use policy defines access and design standards, as well as a range of incentives and benefits when a development provides a POPOS.

Figure 5.38 People using Privately Owned Public Open Spaces

Right: Student practices painting in a POPOS provided by the adjacent development. Hudson Yard, New York City.
Bottom left: Quick-build POPOS plaza on former parking lot at Broadway and 21st Street in Oakland .
Bottom right: POPOS Plaza in front of mixed-use development, 2161 Allston Way, Berkeley.
All pictures by CD+A.



Utilities and Fire Services

Utility and fire services are required to support new development within the Specific Plan Area, including domestic water, wastewater, stormwater, telecommunications, electricity, natural gas, waste and recycling, and fire services. According to the City of Berkeley 2023-2031 Housing Element Update (HEU) EIR – SCH #2022010331 – (HEU Final EIR), including the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Addendum to the Housing Element Update Final EIR (SCH #2022010331) (HEU EIR Plan Addendum), existing utility systems and fire services have sufficient capacity to serve the planned housing developments.

Domestic Water and Wastewater

Domestic Water

The City of Berkeley and East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), the water supplier for the City of Berkeley, typically requires individual developments to make any necessary upgrades. EBMUD's water system is primarily sourced by the Mokelumne River Watershed west of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. There is currently sufficient water capacity for the city and the development anticipated by this Specific Plan. However, the long-term adequacy of the water supply has been susceptible to the effects of climate change. The development of water recycling and conservation programs have offset climate change concerns to date. California Green Building Standards Code (CalGreen) requirements include plumbing fixture maximum flow rates intended to reduce water consumption for all residential and commercial buildings. These standards will be implemented with new development in the Specific Plan Area.

Wastewater

There are two components to ensure the City of Berkeley's wastewater is properly managed: (1) the treatment facility and (2) the collection and conveyance pipes. EBMUD operates the large diameter interceptor sewer and provides municipal wastewater treatment for Berkeley. The City owns and maintains its own sewage collection system. This system includes 254 miles of City-owned sanitary sewer pipe.

EBMUD is anticipated to have adequate dry weather capacity to accept wastewater flows from the planned buildout of this Plan³⁸. Wet weather flows may also be accommodated with implementation of ongoing local and regional programs to reduce infiltration and inflow during wet weather events (City of Berkeley, Housing Element Update EIR, 2022).

Future development under the proposed HEU will require new connections for wastewater conveyance. As described in the HEU Final EIR (see page 4.16-4 of the Draft EIR), Chapter 17.05 of the BMC requires that new development pays its fair share of improvements to the sewer system that would be necessary to accommodate increased flows. This policy and BMC requirements ensure that new developments are not approved until it can be demonstrated that adequate wastewater collection capacity exists, or until a financial commitment to create such capacity has been made.

The City of Berkeley will be making improvements to the sanitary sewer on San Pablo Avenue and other Major and Collector Streets in the city through their Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation and Replacement Project. Construction is scheduled for April through June of 2026 for the following segments of San Pablo Avenue:

- Carleton Street to Derby Street – 14" High Density Polyethylene Pipe (HDPE)
- Oregon Street to Grayson Street – 12" HDPE and 21" Cured in Place Pipe (CIPP) lining crossing San Pablo Avenue along Grayson Street
- Haskell Street to Folger Avenue – 24" HDPE

³⁸ The City's wastewater treatment capacity is 320 million gallons per day (mgd). The existing average daily flow is 63 mgd and the HEU would add 0.77 mgd. Based on the HEU wastewater generation assumption of 40 gallons per day (gdp) for a multifamily unit, the Plan buildout, which is 4,250 units above the HEU maximum buildout, would add 170,000 gdp, which is 0.17 mgd and well within the City's treatment capacity.

Noted improvements are for ongoing maintenance of the City’s sanitary sewer system rather than for increasing capacity.

Stormwater

The Specific Plan Area is highly urbanized and the area is almost entirely covered with impervious surfaces, except for landscaped areas. Future development will have to comply with existing programs and permits, including the BMC and the Municipal Regional Stormwater (MRP 3.0) NPDES Permit (No. CAS612008). All new development or redevelopment projects that create or replace 5,000 square feet of impervious surfaces are “regulated projects” and are required to implement Low Impact Design (LID) Measures and hydromodifications management measures required under the C.3 provisions of the Municipal Regional Stormwater Permit (MRP). These features may include but not be limited to bioretention, permeable paving, detention basins, underground stormwater storage (see *PR-P.8 Green Infrastructure in Public Projects* and *PR-P.9 Green Infrastructure in Private Development* for Plan policies related to rainwater management). For example, on-site infiltration would improve the water quality of stormwater.

Implementation of rainwater measures can be especially challenging in a dense urban area. Measures such as rain barrels and cisterns, green roofs, and preserving undeveloped open space may also need to be considered. MRP 3.0 specifies methods to calculate the required size of treatment devices.

Improvements with Caltrans right-of-way are subject to requirements of Caltrans NPDES Permit Order No. 2-2022-0033-DWQ.

There is a minor possibility that underground creeks beneath San Pablo Avenue, due to deterioration, daylighting, or other creek crossings, could cause the need to reconstruct major storm drain infrastructure. However, the risk appears low given that the historic creek crossings have already been directed into a main storm drain within San Pablo Avenue through this area. The Specific Plan Area also falls outside of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Zone.

Electric, Gas, and Communications

Natural gas and electrical services for the City of Berkeley are provided by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). There is also telecom (cable and internet) service throughout the Specific Plan Area, mainly provided by AT&T and Comcast. Electrical systems within the Specific Plan Area have mainly been undergrounded. Most overhead electrical lines are located within the cross streets.

Electricity, Natural Gas, and Communications upgrades will continue to be available from the providers. Typically, the utility companies will upgrade facilities as needed. It is expected that PG&E will accommodate the electrical and gas demands of the Plan. A service application submitted to PG&E will be required to trigger a review of added electrical and natural gas demand for each new individual development. Likewise existing telecom infrastructure and providers are expected to be able to accommodate development that may be generated by the Plan. In addition, East Bay Community Energy (EBCE) is a local public agency tasked with supplying clean electricity at low rates to customers in Alameda County. EBCE procures electricity and provides local renewable resources, while PG&E continues to administer natural gas service as well as energy transmission, distribution, repair, customer service, and billing for EBCE customers.

Waste and Recycling

The City of Berkeley is one of the few cities in Northern California to operate its own refuse, dual stream recycling and green/food waste curbside collection system, as well as material recovery/drop-off and buyback facilities. The service provides curbside recycling, green/food waste, and refuse collection services. Some of the programs offered by the City’s Solid Waste Division include recycling collection programs for businesses as well as residential and commercial refuse and organic waste collection. Solid waste, recyclable, and compostable materials collected by the City and its contracted companies are transported from the Berkeley Transfer Station, located at 1201 Second Street, for sorting or disposal at off-site facilities.

One permitted landfill in Alameda County has the capacity to accommodate solid waste generated in Berkeley: the Altamont Landfill. The maximum permitted daily throughput at the Altamont Landfill is 11,150 cubic yards, and the maximum permitted capacity is 124.4 million cubic yards. The remaining capacity for solid waste at this landfill is approximately 52.3 million cubic yards (CalRecycle, Solid Waste Information System (SWIS), 2025). The City of Berkeley has achieved a solid waste diversion rate of 69 percent of its solid waste.

Development facilitated by the Plan will not generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure. The Landfills that serve the City of Berkeley have adequate capacity to serve development under the Plan³⁹. The solid waste reduction goals are in alignment with the development of projects within the Specific Plan Area and comply with federal, State, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste (City of Berkeley, Housing Element Update EIR, 2022).

The City of Berkeley General Plan’s Environmental Management Element includes the following goals and policies applicable to solid waste:

- Policy EM-7: Reduced Wastes. Continue to reduce solid and hazardous waste.
- Policy EM-8: Building Reuse and Construction Waste. Encourage rehabilitation and reuse of buildings whenever appropriate and feasible in order to reduce waste, conserve resources and energy, and reduce construction costs.
- Policy EM-9: Recycling and Waste Transfer Stations. Ensure convenient access for Berkeley citizens to transfer stations, recycling, composting, and collection of household hazardous waste products.
- Policy EM-10: Materials Recovery and Remanufacturing. Support and encourage serial materials recovery and remanufacturing industries.

Development facilitated by the Plan will follow the City of Berkeley policies for waste reduction and recycling.

Fire Services

The San Pablo Specific Plan supports increases in development capacity and population in the Specific Plan Area. While the City of Berkeley 2023-2031 Housing Element Update (HEU) EIR, including the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Addendum, finds that there is sufficient fire service capacity to service the proposed new development, ongoing monitoring of building heights, densities, and population growth, and how those trends relate to calls for service and other service demands, is a municipal best practice.

Accordingly, implementation of the San Pablo Specific Plan will include periodic evaluation of fire service demands, including both calls for service related to fire suppression and paramedics services, as well as demand for fire inspections, plan check and other fire prevention-related services.

³⁹ Based on the HEU solid waste generation rate of 4/lbs/unit/day, and conversion factor of 1,000 pounds per cubic yard, the plan buildout would generate 17 cubic yards of solid waste per day. With Berkeley’s 69% diversion rate, the Plan buildout would generate an additional 5.27 cubic yards of solid waste per day, which equates to 1924 cubic yards per year. This represents 0.00368% of the current total remaining landfill capacity of 52.3 million cubic yards.



Specific Plan Administration

Recognizing the Specific Plan's long-term horizon and the potential for changing conditions, new opportunities, and evolving community and City priorities, this section outlines the Specific Plan's adoption, procedures for its administration, and subsequent amendments.

Specific Plan Adoption

The Specific Plan Area is identified as a Priority Development Area (PDA) in Plan Bay Area 2050, a long-range regional plan, prepared by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). PDAs are select areas with strong potential to support sustainable development patterns for housing and jobs in walkable, transit-oriented infill areas. To support preparation of this Specific Plan, the City received a PDA Planning Grant from MTC and ABAG.¹

Additionally, the City's Housing Element Update (2023–2031) includes Program 27 calling for the preparation of the "San Pablo Avenue PDA Specific Plan," to evaluate opportunities to increase allowed densities and development capacity and to study design standards, public improvements, and mechanisms to incentivize affordable housing. Preparation of the Specific Plan began in 2023 and involved regular discussions with the Planning Commission and City Councilmembers, and coordination with staff from regional planning and transportation agencies.

The City of Berkeley initiated and prepared the Specific Plan pursuant to the provisions of California Government Code, Title 7, Division 1, Chapter 3, Article 8 (Sections 65450 through 65457). The law allows the preparation of specific plans as required for the implementation of the General Plan. Specific plans act as a bridge between the vision and ideas of a general plan and specific needs and appropriate standards for an area of the city. They provide standards and guidelines that are tailored for the Specific Plan Area. Jurisdictions may adopt specific plans by resolution or ordinance.

Upon adoption by resolution, the Specific Plan, together with the following accompanying actions, shall govern all properties within the Specific Plan Area: (1) a General Plan amendment, involving revisions to both text and the Land Use Diagram to achieve consistency with the Specific Plan; (2) a Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) amendment, involving revisions to the *Zoning Ordinance* and the Zoning Map to achieve consistency with the Specific Plan; (3) the retirement of the West Berkeley Plan and the San Pablo Avenue Public Improvements Plan; and (4) the adoption of the *Design Standards Document*.

Environmental (CEQA) Review

The Housing Element Update Environmental Impact Report ("2023 HEU EIR"), certified by the City of Berkeley in January 2023, analyzed citywide housing growth under the Housing Element Update, including 3,682 housing units anticipated within the San Pablo Avenue Plan Area. The Specific Plan would increase the development potential to a total of approximately 8,000 units, representing an additional 4,318 units, rounded to 4,500 for the purposes of the CEQA analysis.

The City prepared an Addendum to the 2023 HEU EIR. The Addendum, which includes a Checklist for each environmental topic, documents that the Specific Plan in addition to the HEU would not result in any new or substantially more severe significant environmental impacts than those previously identified in the 2023 HEU EIR, or require new or different mitigation measures.

The project analyzed in the Addendum includes amendments to the BMC and the General Plan, which include new development standards for the C-SP zoning district such as height and FAR, particularly at Designated Nodes, as well as retirement of the West Berkeley Plan and San Pablo Avenue Public Improvements Plan. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15164, the Addendum concludes that the proposed changes do not meet the conditions outlined

¹ [Priority Development Area \(PDA\) Grants | Metropolitan Transportation Commission](#). Last accessed 05/08/2026.

in CEQA Guidelines Section 15162 that would require preparation of a subsequent or supplemental EIR. The City's decision makers will review the Addendum and assess if they agree with the findings that no additional environmental review is needed pursuant to CEQA.

Based on recent housing and CEQA legislation as well as Section 15183 of the CEQA Guidelines it is anticipated that many of the future mixed-use or residential development projects proposed under the Specific Plan will be exempt from further CEQA review. However, the City will make a determination as individual development proposals are submitted to the City for review and approval based on CEQA and permit streamlining legislation in place at that time.

Administering the Specific Plan

Upon City Council adoption of the Specific Plan, all new projects within the Specific Plan Area must demonstrate consistency with the Specific Plan along with the Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC), the *Design Standards Document*, the City's General Plan and other circulation and public realm standards and plans. See *Regulatory Context and Relationship to Other Planning Documents and Projects* in **Chapter 1 Introduction** for other plans and policies acting in the Specific Plan Area, such as the Transit-First Policy Implementation Plan.

Conflict: If any policy or standard in the Specific Plan conflicts with the BMC or the *Design Standards Document*, the BMC and/or the *Design Standards Document* shall prevail.

Severability: If any chapter, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Plan, or future amendments or additions hereto, is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional by the decision of any court, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of the Specific Plan.

Minor Amendments: Non-substantive changes to the Specific Plan such as corrections or technical changes to ensure consistency or clarify uncertainties or ambiguity may be executed by Staff through an administrative process.

Major Amendments: Changes to the Specific Plan that are not minor are considered major amendments, such as substantive changes to policies, land use designations, or development standards, must follow procedures outlined in BMC 22.04.020.

Development Review and Project Approvals

The Specific Plan aims to make development approvals more streamlined. See Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) 23.204.020, Allowed Land Uses, for permit thresholds by use. BMC Chapter 23.402 (Administrative Responsibility) describes City roles and responsibilities when administering the *Zoning Ordinance*. There are 4 permit application review and decision-making authorities that have responsibilities and duties associated with processing permit applications and other requested development project-related approvals:

Zoning Officer: A project that requires approval of a Zoning Certificate can be approved ministerially through a Zoning Certificate issued by a Zoning Administrator. See BMC Section 23.402.040 for details about the Zoning Officer responsibilities and duties.

Zoning Adjustments Board: A project that requires approval of a discretionary permit, such as a Use Permit, Variance, or Administrative Use Permit is reviewed and approved by the Zoning Adjustments Board. See BMC Section 23.402.070 for details about the Zoning Adjustments Board responsibilities and duties.

Design Review: A request for an exemption to a design standard in the *Design Standards Document* would be reviewed and approved by the Design Review Committee and/or Design Review staff. See the *Design Standards Document* for details about the design review process in the Specific Plan Area. See BMC Section 23.402.060 for details about the Design Review Committee responsibilities and duties and BMC Section 23.406.070 for details about the City's design review process.

Landmark, Structures of Merit, and buildings within a Historic District Review: A project that would affect a designated landmark, structure of merit or a building within a historic district requires approval of a Structural Alteration Permit. The Landmark Preservation Commission reviews and acts on such permits. See BMC Section 23.402.050 for details about the Landmark Preservation Commission responsibilities and duties.²

In addition to the City's local development review procedures, State law may influence how projects in the Specific Plan Area are reviewed and approved. Depending on the nature of the proposed project, State laws can require ministerial approval, limit the City's ability to impose certain standards or conditions, or otherwise alter the applicable review process. As State housing and land use laws continue to change, the development review framework affecting the Specific Plan Area will continue to evolve.

Implementation

The Specific Plan will be implemented through the adoption of policies and standards in the **Land Use, Economic Development and Streets -Transportation and Public Realm Chapters**, and the *Design Standards Document*, which are designed to align public and private investments with the Specific Plan's vision and goals. These policies and standards are reflected in amendments to the text and maps of the Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) and the General Plan, as well as through the retirement of the West Berkeley Plan and the San Pablo Avenue Public Improvements Plan.

The City maintains a [dedicated webpage](#) for the adopted Specific Plan, implementation updates, and resources for property owners, developers, businesses, and community members.

Monitoring and Funding

To ensure that the public and City Council remain informed about Specific Plan implementation, the City will continue to prepare annual progress reports and adjust programs and actions, as needed, to advance the objectives outlined in **Chapter 2 Vision and Guiding Principles**.

This Specific Plan is limited in its ability to establish new funding mechanisms; rather, it can only identify potential tools and strategies that may be used to support implementation. To realize the vision of this Specific Plan, the City and community must be creative and proactive in leveraging existing resources and pursuing new funding opportunities that respond to the needs of the Specific Plan Area. The following section, summarized in Table 6.1, identifies potential funding and financing strategies. While not comprehensive, it provides a starting point for identifying tools to support future improvements and investments. In addition, potential funding sources are identified for each policy in the *Implementation Actions* section of this chapter.

Local Revenue and Fees: The City may fund implementation projects in the Specific Plan Area through a range of local revenue sources. These include allocations from the General Fund through the City's budgeting process, or Measure FF Sidewalk and Street Repairs Parcel Tax funds could be made available for the design and construction of street and sidewalk improvement projects in the Specific Plan Area.

Property-Based Financing Tools: Property-based financing tools allow local governments to fund infrastructure and public improvements through revenues generated within a defined area. Mechanisms such as business improvement districts or community benefit districts (BIDs or CBDs) enable property and business owners to collectively fund services and improvements that benefit the district, such as streetscape enhancements, maintenance, and economic development programs. *ED-P.5 Study Feasibility of Forming a BID or CBD*, calls for studying the potential formation of a BID or CBD in the Specific Plan Area and assessing possible boundary options ranging from the entire Specific Plan Area to targeted areas around Designated Nodes. Enhanced infrastructure financing districts (EIFDs),

² [Landmark Alterations | City of Berkeley](#). Last accessed 05/08/2026.

assessment districts, and community facilities districts (CFDs) can generate funding by capturing increased property tax revenues or levying special assessments or taxes on properties that benefit from the improvements.

Development Mechanisms: Development-based funding mechanisms help implement public improvements by leveraging private development activity. Development agreements allow cities and developers to establish negotiated terms for projects, though the level of public benefits provided must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Public-private partnerships allow the City to collaborate with private entities to finance, construct, or maintain infrastructure and other improvements that benefit both new development and the surrounding community. Partnerships with large institutions can result in significant infrastructure investment, while collaborations with local organizations or nonprofits, particularly those connected to the history and character of San Pablo Avenue, may lead to more responsive and place-specific outcomes.

Grant Programs: San Pablo Avenue is a major regional road with frequent transit service and strong potential for multimodal improvements, making it well positioned to compete for federal, State, or regional transportation and transit-oriented community funding. Projects that enhance pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure within the Specific Plan Area align with regional and State priorities to improve safety, support transit use, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Potential funding sources include the following:

- Caltrans' Active Transportation Program grants program (ATP)
- Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC) grant programs
- One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) Program administered by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)
- Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Program administered by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)
- Alameda County (AC) Transit capital funding for transit infrastructure improvements
- Various federal grant programs

Other Tools: Revolving loan funds provide low-interest financing for housing and economic development projects, with loan repayments returned to the fund to support future projects. This structure allows the same pool of funding to be reused over time to support activities such as affordable housing development, building rehabilitation, and small business improvements.

Table 6.1 Potential Funding Strategies and Sources

Funding Source Category	Funding Source	Improvement Category			
		Streets and Public Realm	Transit	Housing	Economic Development
Local Revenue & Fees	Local Revenue	X	X	X	X
Property-Based Financing Tools	Business Improvement District or Community Benefit District (BID/CBD)	X	X		X
	Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Tool (EIFD)	X	X	X	X
	Assessment District	X	X		
	Community Facilities District	X	X	X	
Development Mechanisms	Development Agreement	X	X	X	X
	Public-Private Partnership	X	X	X	
Grant Programs	Active Transportation Programs (ATP)	X	X		
	Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC) Grants	X	X		X
	Metropolitan Transportation Commission (OBAG)	X	X	X	
	Affordable Housing & Sustainable Communities (AFSC)	X	X	X	
	AC Transit Capital Funding		X		X
	Federal Grant Programs	X	X	X	X
Other Tools	Revolving Loan Fund			X	X

Implementation Actions

The following tables (6.2 - 6.4) describe a range of implementation measures, actions, responsibilities, and timeframes, as well as potential funding sources for these measures. These actions should be considered in tandem with the corresponding policies and standards outlined in **Chapters 3 through 5**.

Abbreviations

City of Berkeley

BFD – Berkeley Fire Department

CMO – City Manager’s Office

CAO – City Attorney Office

HHCS – Health, Housing and Community Services

OED – Office of Economic Development

PLNG – Planning and Development Department

PRW – Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department

PW – Public Works

- Transportation Division (“PW Trans”)
- Engineering Division (“PW Eng”)

RSB – Rent Stabilization Board and Staff

BHA – Berkeley Housing Authority

Other:

Alameda CTC – Alameda County Transportation Commission

AC Transit – Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District

Alameda County SBDC – Alameda County Small Business Development Center

BART – San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District

BBDN – Berkeley Business District Network

Caltrans – California Department of Transportation

Timeline

Each table includes the timing of each implementation action. Many implementing actions depend on the availability of funding, and once initial funding is secured, it can be used to identify and pursue additional resources to carry out the program or improvement. Therefore, the timeline will need periodic refinement and updating.

- **On-going** – actions that are already occurring and may be affected by Specific Plan policies and standards.
- **Immediate** – actions that will start with adoption of the Specific Plan.
- **Following other actions** – actions that depend on implementation of projects or other actions. In this case, the dependent project or action is listed.
- Specific time periods are listed for some implementation actions; time periods are in response to:
 - Priorities for the action;
 - Estimate of time needed to undertake action; and
 - Dependency on other actions.

Table 6.2 Plan Administration Implementation Actions

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
Provide annual updates on Plan implementation through the General Plan Annual Progress Report (APR)	PLNG	Input from other City Departments and Partner Agencies	On-going	General Fund
Provide periodic updates to City Council on the following metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new housing units entitled, permitted, or completed. • Summary description of transportation, streetscape, and open space improvements under design, construction and completed. • Summary report of collisions that have occurred within the Specific Plan Area. • Number of active businesses, including new business licenses within the Specific Plan Area. • Funding secured and partnerships established with community groups, agencies, and developers. • Status of implementation actions outlined in this chapter. 	PLNG	Input from other City Departments and Partner Agencies	On-going	General Fund
Identify and pursue funding opportunities Coordinate and monitor grant and other funding opportunities to implement Specific Plan policies.	PLNG, OED, PW		On-going	General Fund
Monitor opportunities to pursue Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) grants AHSC is an annual State grant program that funds construction of affordable housing and improvements related to reducing GHG	HHCS, PW	PLNG, Affordable housing developers,	On-going	General Fund

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
<p>emissions. Certain multimodal and other transportation improvements are fundable.</p> <p>Work with affordable housing developers and partner agencies to prepare and submit proposals for AHSC grants for housing within the Specific Plan Area and transportation infrastructure improvements that are prioritized in this Specific Plan, as appropriate.</p>		AC Transit, Caltrans, etc.		

Table 6.3 Land Use Implementation Actions

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
<p>LU-P.1 Establish the Commercial San Pablo (C-SP) District</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend Title 23 of the Berkeley Municipal Code to establish the C-SP zoning district and the following standards as described in Chapter 3 Land Use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>LU-S.5 Development Standards</i> <i>LU-S.7 Streetscape Standards</i> 	PLNG		Immediate	General Fund (staff time)
<p>LU-P.2 Focus Commercial Uses within Designated Nodes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend the Berkeley Municipal Code to include Designated Nodes, as described in Chapter 3 Land Use, and adopt Designated Node-specific ground-floor frontage requirements and allowed use requirements. Periodically evaluate Designated Node performance and adjust standards and regulations as needed. 	PLNG		Immediate + On-going	General Fund (staff time)

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
LU-P.3 Boundary Adjustments and Re-zonings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rezone parcels in the C-W and C-U zoning districts within the Specific Plan Area to C-SP. Rezone split-zoned parcels fronting San Pablo Avenue and University Avenue to C-SP. 	PLNG		Immediate	General Fund (staff time)
LU-P.4 Amend the General Plan and Map <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend the General Plan text and map as described in Chapter 3 Land Use. Amend Title 23 of the Berkeley Municipal Code text and map as shown in Figure 3.5 in Chapter 3 Land Use, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific Plan Area Boundary Designated Nodes Rezone all C-W and C-U parcels within the Specific Plan Area to C-SP Include MU-LI Affordable and Family Friendly Housing Areas Remove split-zoning inconsistencies and other minor rezoning corrections 	PLNG		Immediate	General Fund (staff time)
LU-P.5 Facilitate Housing on MU-LI Parcels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend Title 23 of the Berkeley Municipal Code text to designate parcels as Affordable and Family-Friendly Housing Areas on MU-LI parcels within the Specific Plan Area, consistent with the Policy description in Chapter 3 Land Use. Require qualifying projects to comply with C-SP development standards. 	PLNG		Immediate	General Fund (staff time)
LU-P.6 Planning and Commercial Use Permit Streamlining <p>Review permitting processes after 5 years. Determine if further monitoring is needed.</p>	PLNG	OED, PW	5 years	General Fund (staff time)

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
LU-P.7 Public Open Space Enhancements Amend the Berkeley Municipal Code to implement the following standards consistent with their descriptions in Chapter 3 Land Use : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>LU-S.1 Sidewalk Expansion Incentive</i> • <i>LU-S.2 Privately-Owned Publicly Accessible Open Space within Designated Nodes</i> • <i>LU-S.3 Side-Street Plaza Incentive</i> • <i>LU-S.4 Mid-Block Passage Incentive</i> 	PLNG		Immediate	General Fund (staff time)
LU-P.8 Expand Allowed Primary and Temporary Uses Add the C-SP zoning district to the Allowed Uses Table in Title 23 of the Berkeley Municipal Code. Compared to the existing C-W zoning district, expand by-right uses (e.g. galleries, light-industrial) and allow additional uses that align with the Specific Plan's goals.	PLNG	OED	Immediate	General Fund (staff time)
Develop outreach program for small businesses (coordinate with ED-P.1,2,3)	OED	PLNG	0 to 3 years	General Fund (staff time)
LU-P.9 Establish Ground Floor Form Types to Promote Pedestrian-Scaled and Flexible Ground Floors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend the Berkeley Municipal Code to establish ground floor frontage types and location requirements as described in the policy. 	PLNG		Immediate	General Fund (staff time)

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
LU-P.10 Establish a Pilot San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program Research and consider adopting a pilot local density bonus program for the Specific Plan Area consistent with the policy described in Chapter 3 Land Use , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requiring in-lieu contributions to the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund. • Prohibiting waivers of critical development and design standards. • Requiring applicants opt-out of State Density Bonus. 	PLNG	HHCS	Within 1 year	General Fund (staff time)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and provide developer and administrative guidance documents for the program. 	PLNG	HHCS	Within 6 months after pilot program initiation	General Fund (staff time)
LU-P.11 Artists Housing and Cultural Districts If the City creates a cultural district within one-half mile of the Specific Plan Area, coordinate with the Civic Arts Commission and the Housing Advisory Commission to consider creation of an affordable artist housing overlay in portions of the Specific Plan Area.	PLNG	OED/Civic Arts, HHCS	Timing dependent on City establishing a cultural district	General Fund (staff time)
Supportive Action - During the Plan Bay Area update, MTC allows cities to request PDA adjustments. The City will request that the PDA boundary be updated to match the Specific Plan Boundary.	PLNG	MTC	Up to 3 years for Plan Bay Area update coordination	General Fund (staff time)

Table 6.4 Economic Development Implementation Actions

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
ED-P.1 Outdoor Business Activation Toolkit See implementation action of the following policies and standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>LU-P.8 Expand Allowed Primary and Temporary Uses</i> • <i>PR-S.1 Sidewalk Zone Standards</i> • <i>PR-P.16 Support Use and Creation of Parklets</i> 	PLNG	OED	Immediate + On-going	General Fund (staff time)
EP-P.2 Support Flexible Commercial Spaces See implementation action of <i>LU-P.8 Expand Allowed Primary and Temporary Uses</i> , which establishes new uses per policy description.	PLNG	OED	Immediate	General Fund (staff time)
ED-P.3 Establish Public-Private Partnerships to Activate the Specific Plan Area Build partnerships with community organizations, local institutions, merchant groups, property owners, and other stakeholders to activate community spaces and organize events consistent with the policy description in Chapter 4 Economic Development . The goals of this are two-fold. First, building partnerships will help city staff better understand and track the changing needs of the local community, and supporting initial activation by the local community will encourage the local community to take a continuing role in activating the Specific Plan Area.	OED	PLNG, CBOs and business organizations	On-going	General Fund (staff time); partner contributions
Outreach by OED in alignment with <i>ED-P.6 Economic Development Technical Assistance</i> to potential community organization, business, and other private and institutional partners. Outreach should consist of mailing to the existing community and to new businesses and organizations that locate in the Specific Plan Area regarding available assistance and the ability to meet with groups to discuss available assistance. This can include technical assistance for navigating	OED	PLNG, PW, Neighborhood Services/Special Events	Up to 3 years	

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
permit requirements such as encroachment permits, temporary use, temporary street closures, and vendor permits.				
Leverage Berkeley Business District Network (BBDN) and CBOs to coordinate events and Specific Plan Area-wide promotions through on-going OED staff interactions with BBDN and related organizations and providing information about potential relationship between Specific Plan Area businesses and organizations and BBDN member events and promotions.	OED	BBDN, CBOs	On-going	
ED-P.4 Support and Expand Existing Business Clusters City Support and Technical Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OED to offer technical assistance to emerging clusters as defined in the policy description in Chapter 4 Economic Development. 	OED	BBDN	On-going + up to 5 years	General Fund (staff time)
Coordination with related policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with implementation of <i>ED-P.7 Establish a Process to Prioritize Public Investment in Designated Nodes</i> to ensure improvements are aligned with cluster organization initiatives. See discussion of existing cluster organizations in Chapter 4 Economic Development. OED can add to the list of cluster organizations, as they form, through contacts with the Specific Plan Area community as part of other efforts. Coordinate with implementation of Policy <i>ED-P.5 Study Feasibility of Forming a Business Improvement District (BID) or Community Benefit District (CBD)</i> to ensure business clusters are included in the study. 	OED, PLNG	PW Trans, PR&W	On-going + up to 5 years	General Fund (staff time)
ED-P.5 Study Feasibility of Forming a Business Improvement District (BID) or Community Benefit District (CBD) Fund and initiate a study evaluating the feasibility of creating 1 or more business improvement districts (BIDs) or community benefit districts	OED	Local businesses and property owners	3 years (potentially earlier if strong interest is expressed by	General Fund (staff time) Grants

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
<p>(CBDs) within the Specific Plan Area, consistent with the policy description in Chapter 4 Economic Development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gauge Specific Plan Area stakeholder interest in moving forward with a feasibility study through initial outreach. Consider multiple geographies (full Specific Plan Area vs. Designated Nodes), hybrid models, and cultural district components. Consider the potential for other organizations similar to BIDs and CBDs. Conduct equity-centered outreach with businesses, CBOs, and nonprofits. 			Specific Plan Area stakeholders and funding is available)	
<p>ED-P.6 Economic Development Technical Assistance</p> <p>OED will provide technical assistance consistent with Policy description in Chapter 4 Economic Development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish approach for outreach, assistance, and Plan Area economic performance. Review effectiveness after 24 months and decide future viability. 	OED		<p>Within 1 year</p> <p>Review: 24 month after start</p>	General Fund
<p>ED-P.7 Establish a Process to Prioritize Public Investment in Designated Nodes</p> <p>Pursue funding for improvements in the Designated Nodes, such as grants for streetscape improvements, Alameda CTC improvement funding, other state and federal grants and funding.</p> <p>As citywide multimodal transportation plans are updated, take this Specific Plan's prioritization of future improvements into account. See also <i>T-P.14 Prioritizing Multimodal Safety Improvements</i> and <i>T-P.18 Prioritize Connection with Surrounding Neighborhoods and Districts</i>.</p>	PW Trans, PRW, PLNG	OED, MTC, and Alameda CTC	On-going	Identify funding for public improvements (potential General Fund and grant funding)

Table 6.5 Street Implementation Actions

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
Transportation				
Retire San Pablo Avenue Public Improvements Plan (2004) The San Pablo Avenue Public Improvements Plan (2004) was adopted by Resolution No. 62,741-N.S. December 7, 2004. The Specific Plan replaces the street design policies and standards of the San Pablo Avenue Public Improvements Plan and the retirement of the San Pablo Avenue Public Improvements Plan is an action taken with the adoption of the Specific Plan.	PLNG		Immediate	General Fund (staff time)
T-P.1 Improve Mobility, Access, and Safety for All People Implement the goals for the City's Complete Streets Policy and Vision Zero Action Plan by designing all street and transportation improvements within the Specific Plan Area to enhance mobility, access and, safety for all people of all abilities who are walking, biking, taking transit, and driving while providing for deliveries, freight, emergency response, evacuation and maintenance access.	PW Trans	Alameda CTC Caltrans AC Transit	On-going	General Fund (staff time)
T-P.2 Future Transportation Study Needs for San Pablo Avenue Coordinate with Alameda CTC, AC Transit, Caltrans, and potentially the City of Albany to initiate and complete Multimodal Complete Streets Study of San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley to determine a preferred design concept for redesign of the street and work together towards construction of the preferred concept. This study will address the feasibility of dedicated bus lanes and separated bikeways on San Pablo Avenue from Heinz Street to the south city limits.	PW Trans	Alameda CTC Caltrans AC Transit City of Albany	Partner agency coordination and discussions, 1 to 2 years Study, timing to be determined.	General Fund (staff time) for partner agency coordination and discussions General Fund for grant matching funds County, Regional, State, and Federal Grants to fund studies and implementation

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
				Alameda CTC CIP potential to support implementation
Supportive Implementation Action: Vision Zero Action Plan and Pedestrian Plan updates should assess transportation needs and performance of multimodal improvements to decide if a San Pablo Avenue Multimodal Complete Streets Study is a City priority.	PW Trans	Alameda CTC, AC Transit, Caltrans, PLNG	1 to 2 years for Plan updates	General Fund Grants
Supportive Implementation Action: A San Pablo Avenue Safety Assessment should be coordinated with Alameda CTC to conduct a follow-up safety assessment after completion of the Alameda CTC San Pablo Avenue Corridor Safety Enhancements and Parallel Bike Routes Projects to evaluate the effectiveness of improvements for pedestrians and cyclists. Construction is expected to be completed in 2027 to 2028. Also see implementation steps for <i>T-P.2 Future Transportation Study Needs for San Pablo Avenue</i> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update list of intersection improvements. As part of the follow-up safety study, review, update, and implement improvements identified in Figure 5.7 in Chapter 5 Streets-Transportation and Public Realm and Appendix D. Use this updated list to guide future implementation, reflecting current conditions, safety need and community input. • Assess Bulb-Out Extensions for Public Use. After completion of the ACTC San Pablo Avenue Corridor Safety Enhancements assess opportunities to enhance constructed bus bulb-out extensions on San Pablo Avenue for general public and transit rider benefit, such as seating, additional trees and landscaping, bicycle racks, pedestrian-scale lighting, or public amenities. 	PW Trans	Alameda CTC	1 to 3 years after completion of the Alameda CTC San Pablo Avenue Corridors Safety Enhancement s and Parallel Bike Routes Projects	General Fund (staff time) Alameda CTC

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
Supportive Implementation Action: Advocate for Alameda CTC Bus Lanes and Bike Lanes Project implementation including finalizing design, identifying full funding, and constructing project.	PW Trans	Alameda CTC	1 to 3 years	General Fund (staff time)
T-P.3 Maintain and Improve Bus Service in Collaboration with Alameda CTC and AC Transit Coordinate with partners to align service levels to meet demand and implement infrastructure upgrades in alignment with the Transit First Policy Implementation Plan. Monitor progress, needs, and implementation through the AC Transit/City of Berkeley Interagency Liaison Committee. Also see implementation steps for <i>T-P.2 Future Transportation Study Needs for San Pablo Avenue</i> .	PW Trans	AC Transit, Alameda CTC, Caltrans, PLNG	On-going	General Fund (staff time)
T-P.4 Implement Signal Timing and Transit Signal Priority (TSP) Coordinate with partner agencies to assess bus transit reliability resulting from existing TSP improvements and Safety Enhancement project bus stop improvements. It is assumed that Safety Enhancement improvements will be complete by end of 2028. ³ Following assessment, identify funding for design and construction of any recommended additional improvements. BFD shall participate in the design, testing and performance monitoring of TSP systems. City-supported TSP efforts shall include emergency vehicle signal preemption.	PW Trans	Alameda CTC, Caltrans AC Transit City of Albany BFD	3 to 5 years	County, Regional, and State grants
T-P.5 Create an Active Parking and Loading Management Program for the Specific Plan Area Reach out to businesses and property owners within the Specific Plan Area to identify a location to pilot an active parking and loading management program. Likely locations include the University Avenue, Cedar Street, and Dwight Way Designated Nodes. The pilot includes	PW Trans	OED	3 years	General Fund

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³ [San Pablo Avenue Corridor Safety Enhancements fact sheet](#), August 2025.

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
discussion with businesses and surrounding neighborhoods regarding their interest in opting into the Residential Preferential Parking (RPP) program. Council approval would be needed to make these areas eligible for the RPP program.				
T-P.6 Implement Mobility Hub Features in the University Avenue Node Gauge level of interest and support from partner agencies and organizations (MTC, AC Transit, and Bay Wheels) to study feasibility and implementation of Mobility Hub features.	PW Trans	MTC, AC Transit, and Bay Wheels	3 to 5 years	General Fund
Install a bike corral near the Addison Street bike boulevard crossing improvement at as a first step toward creating a mobility hub in the University Avenue Designated Node. Crossing is being constructed by the Alameda CTC Safety Enhancement project; coordinate with project and possibility of locating the corral outside of the construction area to allow for early installation.	PW Trans	AC Transit	1 to 3 years	General Fund
Identify funding for study and design of Mobility Hub and undertake study , including business, transit rider, and general community outreach to identify types of improvements, their locations and cost to implement. Also identify funding sources and timeline.	PW Trans	MTC, AC Transit, and Bay Wheels	1 to 2 years following installation of bike corral given funding availability	General Fund and potential grant funding
Implement Mobility Hub features in the University Avenue Node through coordination with partner agencies and organizations, City work crews, and possibly work by construction contractors to install Mobility Hub features and make associated improvements.	PW Trans	MTC, AC Transit, and Bay Wheels	1 to 2 years completion of Mobility Hub Study given funding availability	General Fund and potential grant funding

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
T-P.7 Evaluate Other Locations for Some Mobility Hub Features As development occurs in the Specific Plan Area and mobility needs change, evaluate needs for potential improvements in other Designated Nodes.	PW Trans	MTC, AC Transit, and Bay Wheels	6 to 8 years	General Fund
T-P.8 Lower Speed Limit on San Pablo Avenue Evaluate Potential to Lower Speed Limit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an Engineering and Traffic Survey (E&TS) to evaluate the feasibility of reducing speed limits along San Pablo Avenue. The study should identify the need and potential for traffic calming improvements including signal timing and physical improvements. E&TS will not be done until Alameda CTC Safety Enhancement Project has been constructed and operated for at least 1 year. If the E&TS supports lower speed limit, request Caltrans approval and prepare plans to implement improvements, such as signal timing changes and replace speed limit signs. If Caltrans approves, implement improvements. If Caltrans does not approve, advocate for State legislation to support the ability to lower the speed limit on urban state highways in a mixed-use environment with high transit service. 	PW Trans	Caltrans, AC Transit, and Alameda CTC	Approximately 3 years (at least 12 months after Safety Enhancement project construction is complete)	General Fund and potential grant funding
T-P.9 Pedestrian Crossing Frequency Monitor safety at the 5 long San Pablo Avenue blocks within the Specific Plan Area as part of collision data and other transportation safety studies that are performed. If safety monitoring indicates the need for mid-block crossings of San Pablo Avenue along any of these long blocks, prioritize improvements, design, and implementation based on safety and available funding.	PW Trans	Caltrans, PLNG	On-going	General Fund, State Affordable Housing Sustainability Grants, Developer Funding
T-P.10 Intersection Improvements Monitor multimodal safety at intersections within the Specific Plan Area and identify improvements as needed.	PW Trans	Caltrans, PLNG	On-Going	General Fund, State Affordable Housing

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
<p>T-P.11 Pedestrian Crossing Design Monitor safety at the pedestrian crossings that have been identified for additional improvements.</p> <p>T-P.12 Minor Side-Street Intersection Improvements Same actions as for <i>T-P.10 Intersection Improvements</i>, above.</p> <p>Prioritize, design, and implement improvements based on safety and available funding. Monitoring safety, updating prioritization, and types of improvements are addressed in <i>T-P.19 Monitor Changing Multimodal Needs and Conditions</i>.</p>				<p>Sustainability Grants, Developer Funding</p> <p>Include in other planned public improvement project</p>
<p>Supportive Implementation Action:</p> <p>Verify that the Pedestrian Plan update reviews and prioritizes intersection improvements in the Specific Plan Area.</p>	PW Trans		1 to 2 years for Pedestrian Plan update	General Fund
<p>T-P.13 Make Safety Improvements at Driveways</p> <p>Monitor development and other improvement projects with driveways on major roads and require that safety improvements are made as needed as part of proposed projects.</p>	PW Trans and PLNG	Caltrans	On-Going	Funded by owner/developer
<p>T-P.14 Prioritizing Multimodal Safety Improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As multimodal safety, access, and comfort issues are identified through on-going review of collision data and transportation safety studies are performed in the Specific Plan Area, continue to identify and prioritize multimodal safety improvements at these locations. For those with particular modal priorities, implement <i>T-P.15 Transit Improvements</i>, <i>T-P.16 Bicycle Improvements</i>, and <i>T-P.17 Pedestrian Improvements</i> below. Prioritize safety improvements identified in Appendix D. 	PW Trans	Caltrans and Alameda CTC	On-going, address other improvements as identified	<p>General fund (staff time)</p> <p>State, Regional, or Alameda CTC CIP or grant funding</p>
<p>Supportive Implementation Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the Vision Zero Action Plan update, maintain the designation of the full length of San Pablo Avenue as a high-injury street. The Pedestrian Plan update reflects this by 	PW Trans		1 to 2 years	General Fund

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
designating the full length of San Pablo Avenue as a Prioritized High-Injury Street.				
T-P.15 Transit Improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to coordinate AC Transit service through on-going staff communication and the AC Transit/City of Berkeley Interagency Liaison Committee to best serve the needs of Specific Plan Area residents, businesses, workers, and visitors. Coordinate with partner agencies to set a timeline for achieving Transit First Policy 18, to complete the University Avenue transit corridor plan by 2029; or as possible given funding constraints. This could be done as part of a University Avenue Specific Plan process to update the 1996 University Avenue Area Plan. Verify citywide priorities between University Avenue and San Pablo Avenue through an update of Vision Zero Action Plan, as studying transit improvements is part of comprehensive multimodal access and safety planning efforts for both streets. 	PW Trans and PLNG	AC Transit, BART, and Capitol Corridor	Service Coordination: on-going University Avenue Transit Study: establish timing for study in next 1 to 3 years	General Funds from City and partner agencies Coordinate with partner agencies for County, Regional, and State grant funding

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
T-P.16 Bicycle Improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Russell/Oregon Street and Heinz Street intersection improvements – These intersections and the sections of San Pablo Avenue between them are being planned for bicycle and pedestrian improvements as part of the Alameda CTC Bus Land and Bike Lane Project. Given the current estimate of 2035 for completion of this project and the Bike Plan Updates identification of this project as a priority, the City will begin working with Caltrans and Alameda CTC to complete these improvements as an independent project. Prioritize bicycle improvements to best serve the needs of Specific Plan Area residents, businesses, workers, and visitors. Work to design and construct priority improvements. Also see, <i>T-P.6 Implement Mobility Hub Features in the University Avenue Node</i> implementation action for implementing bike corral at Addison Street bike boulevard intersection. 	PW Trans	Caltrans and Alameda CTC	Russell and Heinz Street improvement to be determined On-going, address other improvements as identified	Prioritization – General Fund Planning, Design, and Construction – Measure FF State, Regional, or Alameda CTC CIP or grant funding
T-P.17 Pedestrian Improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize pedestrian improvements to best serve the needs of Specific Plan Area residents, businesses, workers, and visitors. Work to design and construct priority improvements. As part of the Pedestrian Plan update, evaluate the streets in the Specific Plan Area for potential designation as Prioritized High-Injury Network, and evaluate prioritization of pedestrian improvements in the Specific Plan Area as well as those providing access to the Specific Plan Area. 	PW Trans	Caltrans and Alameda CTC	On-going, address other improvements as identified 1 to 2 years for Pedestrian Plan Update	Prioritization – General Fund Planning, Design, and Construction – Measure FF State, Regional, or Alameda CTC CIP or grant funding
T-P.18 Prioritize Connection with Surrounding Neighborhoods and Districts <p>Review and update priorities for future residents' needs for multimodal connections with the surrounding community and take these priorities into consideration in future updates to the Berkeley Pedestrian Plan, the Bicycle Plan, and the Transit First Policy Implementation Plan.</p>	PW Trans	Partner agencies	Per timing of updates to other modal plans	General fund Grants

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
T-P.19 Monitor Changing Multimodal Needs and Conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with citywide priorities by assessing and prioritizing multimodal and pedestrian-focused improvements in the Specific Plan Area at a citywide policy level through the updates to the Vision Zero Plan and Pedestrian Plan. Work with partner agencies to undertake periodic safety assessments and assess multimodal needs within the Specific Plan Area and the safety record of streets in the Specific Plan Area. This could include a review and update of priorities and needed improvements. Use this updated list to guide future implementation, reflecting current conditions, safety need and community input. 	PW Trans	Partner agencies	1 to 2 years for Plan Update coordination Periodically as needed Coordinate with updates to modal plans	General Fund (staff time)
Public Realm				
PR-P.1 Sidewalk Zones <p>Implement the Specific Plan's sidewalk zone standards through public improvement projects and private improvements including sidewalk widening and private improvements in the public right of way associated with development projects.</p> <p>Overtime, as public improvements are made to San Pablo Avenue and new development occurs, projects and planning approvals will reestablish the public right of way where adjacent landscape or other elements have reduced it.</p> <p>Related standards to be used in implementation of this policy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>LU-S.1 Sidewalk Expansion Incentive</i> <i>PR-S.1 Sidewalk Zone Standards</i> <i>PR-S.2 Reestablish Sidewalk Width</i> 	PW	PLNG Partner agencies, private development, and businesses	On-going	Funding through other public and private projects Permit Service Center fund

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
PR-P.2 Sidewalk Incentive Review development projects to ensure that the required public sidewalk widening are provided and verify proper use of incentive credit for reduction of required Private Usable Open Space. Related standards include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>LU-S.1 Sidewalk Expansion Incentive</i> • <i>PR-S.1 Sidewalk Zone Standards</i> • <i>PR-S.2 Reestablish Sidewalk Width</i> 	PW	PLNG Developers	On-going	Funding through other public and private projects
PR-P.3 Improve Street Lighting for the Safety and Comfort of All Users Integrate the design recommendations in this policy into the City's draft Streetlight Comprehensive Plan and in the interim use the design recommendations to guide street lighting improvements that are made within the Specific Plan Area.	PW	Partner agencies	1 to 2 years	General Fund (staff time) Permit Service Center fund
PR-P.4 Enhance Street Tree Health and Expand Tree Canopy The City and developers/property owners will plant new trees and/or improve conditions for existing trees as part of public improvements made to streets and sidewalks through public projects and as required for new development and major remodeling projects. New tree plantings and improvements will be made in compliance with the following Specific Plan standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>PR-S.3 San Pablo Avenue Tree Standards</i> • <i>PR-S.4 University Avenue Tree Standards</i> • <i>PR-S.5 Other Side-Street Trees</i> • <i>PR-S.6 Landscaping in Tree Wells and Planters</i> 	PW Developers or property owners	PRW and PLNG, review planned improvements	On-going	General Fund (staff time) Potential new Parks and Recreation Fees Grants or General Fund for City improvements Developer or property owners for private improvements
PR-P.5 Enhance and Expand Other Landscaping The City and developers/property owners will plant other landscaping as part of public improvements made to streets and sidewalks through public projects, as required for new development and major remodeling	PW Developers, property owners, or businesses	PRW, review planned improvements	On-going	General Fund (staff time) Potential new Parks and Recreation Fees

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
<p>projects, and in tandem with other improvements that property owners, businesses and residents may make along sidewalks adjacent to their properties. New landscape plantings and improvements will be made in compliance with the following Specific Plan policies and standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>PR-S.6 Landscaping in Tree Wells and Planters</i> • <i>PR-P.6 Long-term Landscaped Median Design</i> • <i>PR-P.7 Near-term Opportunities for Re-landscaping Medians</i> • <i>PR-P.8 Green Infrastructure in Public Projects</i> • <i>PR-P.9 Green Infrastructure in Private Development</i> 				<p>Grants or General Fund for City improvements</p> <p>Developers, property owners, businesses, or residents for private improvements</p>
<p>Street Furniture</p> <p>The City and developers/property owners will install street furniture as part of public improvements made to streets and sidewalks through public projects, as required for new development and major remodeling projects, and in tandem with other improvements that property owners, businesses and residents may make along sidewalks adjacent to their properties. New street furniture installations will be made in compliance with the following Specific Plan policies and standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>PR-S.7 Public Seating</i> • <i>PR-S.8 Trash and Recycling Receptacles</i> • <i>PR-S.9 Bicycle Racks</i> • <i>PR-S.10 Raised Planters</i> • <i>PR-P.11 Other Street Furnishings</i> <p>Also see, <i>T-P.6 Implement Mobility Hub Features in the University Avenue Node</i> implementation action for implementing bike corral at Addison Street bike boulevard intersection.</p>	PW and PRW	Developers, property owners or businesses	On-going	<p>General Fund</p> <p>Grants</p> <p>Developers, property owners, or businesses</p>

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
Bus Stop Improvements The City and AC Transit will work together to evaluate and improve bus stops in the Specific Plan Area in support of the following Specific Plan policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>PR-P.10 Continue to Improve Bus Stops</i> 	PW Trans and AC Transit	Caltrans	Following completion of Alameda CTC Safety Enhancement Project and on a 5-year evaluation cycle after	Grants and Measure FF
PR-P.6 Long-term Landscaped Median Design The City will provide long-term guidance for median landscape design and planting based on the recommendations in this policy and related Specific Plan standards and policies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>PR-S.3 San Pablo Avenue Tree Standards</i> <i>PR-S.4 University Avenue Tree Standards</i> 	PW and PRW		On-going	General Fund (staff time) Grants
PR-P.7 Near-term Opportunities for Re-landscaping Medians As intersection and other improvements are made to San Pablo Avenue associated median improvements the design of the improvements will implement Specific Plan policies and standards, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>PR-S.3 San Pablo Avenue Tree Standards</i> <i>PR-S.4 University Avenue Tree Standards</i> <i>PR-P.6 Long-term Landscaped Median Design</i> 	PW	PRW, review planned improvements	On-going	General Fund (staff time) Grants or General Fund for City improvements
PR-P.8 Green Infrastructure in Public Projects Implement green infrastructure improvements as required by the current MRP and/or the Caltrans NPDES permit as applicable to the public improvement project and in consideration of the guidance in this policy.	PW and Caltrans	PRW and PW, review planned improvements	On-going	General Fund (staff time)

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
PR-P.9 Green Infrastructure in Private Development The City and developers/property owners will coordinate implementation of green infrastructure in the public realm as part of private project investments.	Developers, property owners, or businesses	PRW, PW, and PLNG review planned improvements	On-going	Developers, property owners, businesses, or residents for private improvements Permit Service Center fund
PR-P.10 Continue to Improve Bus Stops The City will coordinate with Alameda CTC, AC Transit, and Caltrans to identify funding for bus stop improvements independent from the Alameda CTC San Pablo Avenue Projects.	PW Trans	Alameda CTC Caltrans AC Transit City of Albany	On-going	General Fund (staff time) for partner agency coordination and discussions Grants
PR-P.11 Other Street Furnishings Additional public street furnishings, such as public restrooms or information kiosks, will be installed in the right of way where an identified need exists. As these needs are determined, it may be appropriate to identify Specific Plan Area standards that are coordinated with the street furnishing standards in the Specific Plan.	PW and PRW	Caltrans AC Transit	As needed	General Fund (staff time) Budgets of specific projects implementing other street furnishings
PR-P.12 Facilitate Wayfinding and Placemaking Programs Identify opportunities to implement wayfinding and placemaking as part of the implementation of the following Economic Development policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ED-P.4 Support and Expand Existing Business Clusters</i> • <i>ED-P.5 Study Feasibility of Forming a Business Improvement District (BID) or Community Benefit District (CBD)</i> 	OED	PW and Caltrans Potential future BID	On-going and up to 5 years	General Fund (staff time) Support from local businesses Grants
PR-P.13 Facilitate Installation of Public Art that Benefits the Public Realm OED/Civic Arts, Public Works, and Parks, Recreation and Waterfront staff are to review feasibility of integrating public art into public improvement projects within the Specific Plan Area as those projects	OED/Civic Arts and Civic Arts Commission	PW and PRW	On-going	General Fund (staff time) Grants Donations for design and installation of art

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
receive funding for conceptual design, environmental documentation, and final design.				
PR-P.14 Design for People of All Ages and Abilities Public improvements in the Specific Plan Area will be design, implemented, maintained, and operated through the use of a universal design approach that meets and exceeds compliancy with the Federal Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations by following the guidance of this policy and other best practices of universal design.	PW and PRW	Partner agencies Potential future BID	On-going	Planning, Design, and Construction – General Fund, Measure FF, and other local, regional, and state funding; and private funding as appropriate. Maintenance and operations – General Fund and private funding as appropriate.
PR-P.15 Create Side-Street Plazas Implementation of this policy will utilize a phased process: In the near-term, City staff will reach out to non-profits, businesses, neighborhood groups, and other community organizations to identify opportunities for quick-build plazas. If community partners are identified and commit to supporting implementation, funding can be pursued, improvements can be designed and implemented, along with an assessment to verify viability of full or partial street access. If community partners are not identified, the City may choose to pursue near-term quick-build plazas as a public project if funding is available. The City will also coordinate with other City efforts (see implementation actions of <i>T-P.2 Future Transportation Study Needs for San Pablo Avenue</i>) and other agency transportation improvement projects to include them as priority improvement projects.	PW, OED, BFD, and PRW	Community partners and Caltrans	Up to 3 years	General Fund (staff time) Community partner's funds Grants
Long-term, City staff and community partners, including potential future BID(s) can pursue design, fundraising, and implementation of permanent side-street plazas.	Community partners	PW, OED, PRW, Alameda CTC and Caltrans	3 to 6 years and after near-term implementation	Community partner's funds Potential new Parks and Recreation Fees Grants

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
In the near-term and long-term , the City will pursue opportunities to implement side-street plazas by funding and undertaking the design and construction of permanent side-street plazas as standalone projects or in conjunction with adjacent public improvement projects. The Berkeley Fire Department will be included as principal and equal partner in the selection and design of locations.	BFD, PW and PRW	Alameda CTC and Caltrans	On-going	General Fund (staff time) Grants
New development projects may design, build, and provide activation for side-street plazas adjacent to their projects.	Developer	PLNG, PW, PRW, and Caltrans	As proposed	Developers
PR-P.16 Support Use and Creation of Parklets For the first 3 years of Specific Plan implementation, waive annual Outdoor Commerce Use Fee for parklets using free parking spaces and reduce paid parking fee by 75% for parklets using paid parking spaces. After 3 years of implementation, review effectiveness of fee reductions and revise as needed.	PW	OED PLNG	Up to 3 years; afterwards, review and revise fee reductions as needed	Businesses, property owners, Parking Meter Fund
PR-P.17 Design and Use of Curb Extensions When a developer or property owner receives approval for construction and use of a curb extension, waive annual Sidewalk Seating Permit fees for up to 10 years from the first commercial use of the increased sidewalk space. After 3 years of implementation, review effectiveness of fee reductions and revise as needed.	PW	OED	Up to 3 years; afterwards, review and revise fee reductions as needed	Businesses, Permit Service Center Fund
PR-P.18 Commercial and Other Private Use of Sidewalks and the Public Realm Short Term Use and Activation – In the near-term, OED staff should facilitate community, business, and property owner-supported activation of the public realm by informing potential partners about possibilities and supporting them in getting permit approvals for activation and use of public space.	OED and Community partners	PW, PRW, Caltrans	Up to 5 years	OED (initial staff time) Potential new Parks and Recreation Fees Community partner's funds Grants

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
When a developer or property owner receives approval to expand the sidewalk and applies for commercial use of the sidewalk, waive annual Outdoor Commerce fee for up to 10 years from the first commercial use of the increased sidewalk space. After 3 years of implementation, review effectiveness of fee reductions encouraging active commercial use of the sidewalk in the Specific Plan Area, and revise as needed.				
Short Term or On-going Use and Activation – Potential BIDs or property owners/managers who have implemented side-street plazas, POPOs, or provided sidewalk widening can propose and implement activations that receive permit approval.	BIDs or property owners and managers	PW, PR&W, Caltrans	As proposed	BID or property owner/manager funds
PR-P.19 Purchase Underutilized Small Properties for Public Open Space Assess potential for funding the cost of property acquisition.	PRW	PLNG	Up to 3 years	General Fund (staff time)
Following assessment, if funding can be identified, move forward to purchase, improve, and maintain new public open space.	PRW	—	3 years after assessment complete	Potential new Parks and Recreation Fees Grants
Supportive Action – Nexus Study to Support Citywide Park and Open Space Funding Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department staff should undertake a citywide nexus study that assesses the need for new parks and public open spaces within the Specific Plan Area and evaluates the legal and financial basis for establishing a development impact fee and/or adjusting the local property tax rate to support property acquisition, development and maintenance of public park space within the Specific Plan Area and maintenance of parks elsewhere in the city. Related Policy: <i>PR-P.18 Purchase Underutilized Small Properties for Public Open Space</i>	PRW	PW PLNG	Up to 3 years	General Fund

Action Description	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timeline	Potential Funding Source
PR-P.20 Privately Owned Public Open Spaces Implement supportive land use policies and standards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>LU-S.2 Privately-Owned Public Open Space within Designated Nodes Incentive</i> 	PLNG and PRW	Developers	On-going	Permit fees for review and approval General Fund for ongoing review of operations and maintenance
Utilities and Fire Services				
Implementation of infrastructure services and improvements will be achieved through current and on-going policies, programs, and actions.	PW	PLNG (Development Review) Utility provider partners	On-going	Utility and City Development Fees
Conduct periodic analysis of how increased population, density, and building height change the community's risk profile and initiate future review of Fire Department deployment, staffing, facilities, equipment, and the Standards of Coverage and Community Risk Assessment. The Specific Plan should include similar triggers for the preparation of an updated San Pablo Fire/EMS Deployment Impact Analysis, including increases demand for Fire Life Safety Plans Examiners and Fire Prevention Inspectors, for review of proposed plans new construction, and on-going routine fire inspections.	BFD	PLNG	Every 5 years after adoption	General Fund

Appendix A:

Key Existing Conditions

San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

Adopted – September 29, 2026

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Project Team

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Introduction

This report describes the location of the Specific Plan Area and surrounding Study Area, and the key existing conditions in the area that will inform the public planning process and development of the Specific Plan's policies, standards, and implementation actions.

The desired outcomes of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan are to:

- Identify the community's vision for the future of the area.
- Provide a framework for that offers opportunities for living, working, and taking part in community life.
- Defines policies, standards, and implementation actions for achieving the community's vision.
- Prioritizes equity, promotes inclusivity, and strives to eliminate disparities

This document includes the following sections:

1. **San Pablo Specific Plan Area and Study Area** defines the Specific Plan Area, and the Study Area surrounding the Plan Area, and the methodology used in defining these planning areas.
2. **Community Demographics and Housing Characteristics** presents assessments of recent population change and shifts in racial and ethnic diversity. It includes an overview of historic and current policies related to equity, and an assessment of household incomes, tenancy, and housing cost with the Study Area.
3. **Infrastructure Assessment** provides information on the relationship between expected growth in the Specific Plan Area and the capacity of utilities and other infrastructure to serve these expanded needs.
4. **Mobility Conditions, Projects, and Planning** describes existing traffic conditions, transit services, recent transportation safety conditions, and related plans and policies, including transportation improvement projects planned between 2025 and 2028.
5. **Land Use Planning Policies and Policy Gaps** provides an overview of existing land use, policies and standards, along San Pablo Avenue, State legislation and regional policies that will influence the development of the Specific Plan, an estimate of the housing capacity of existing policies, and a discussion of the policy gaps that the Specific Plan can address.
6. **Affordable Housing Policies and Potential Production** describes recent and the potential production of affordable housing in the Specific Plan Area given existing State and local policies, including Berkeley's affordable housing preference policy.
7. **Commercial Displacement Risk** provides an assessment of existing commercial conditions along San Pablo Avenue focusing on locally owned businesses. The assessment highlights the types of businesses that have a risk of displacement and the factors that influence the risk of displacement.
8. **Public Realm Assessment** describes the conditions that shape the public realm along San Pablo Avenue including streetscape, sidewalk conditions, and building and site frontages along the street. Safety conditions and people's perception of safety are discussed. An assessment of existing community life and the factors that shape the potential for community life along San Pablo Avenue is also included.
9. **Resilience and Climate Adaption Conditions and Plans** describes the elements and policies of the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and the Climate Action Plan that are related to the Specific Plan Area. Relevant General Plan Open Space and Recreation policies, a discussion of San Pablo Avenue's urban tree canopy, and potential for the Specific Plan Area to be a designated Transit-Oriented Community are also provided.

San Pablo Specific Plan Area and Study Area

The San Pablo Specific Plan Area is informed by the existing Priority Development Area (PDA) boundary and is comprised of individual parcels for which the Plan's policies, standards, and implementation actions will apply. The City of Berkeley identified and nominated the PDA boundary along San Pablo Avenue during the formation of Plan Bay Area 2050 (2021) and in response to regional land use and transportation planning, and associated planning and funding opportunities.¹ These parcels primarily front onto San Pablo Avenue and are zoned **West Berkeley Commercial (C-W)**. In addition, adjacent parcels with the C-W zoning that are on side streets to San Pablo Avenue or in designated nodes are also included (see further discussion of nodes in the Land Use section). Along University Avenue, the majority of properties are zoned C-W and **University Commercial District (C-U)**, and these properties are included as well. Some parcels are “split zoned” between C-W and another zoning designation See **Figure 1**.

The Study Area includes the neighborhoods and employment areas that are proximate to and have a strong relationship with the uses along San Pablo Avenue. The Study Area extends from the I-80 freeway in the west to Sacramento Street in the east and from Albany in the north to Emeryville and Oakland in the south. See **Figure 1**. The Study Area is included in select existing conditions assessments to gain an understanding of the social and economic relationships between San Pablo Avenue and West Berkeley, to identify historic and culturally significant² locations in proximity to San Pablo Avenue, and to identify parks, open spaces, and other community assets that are used by people living and working in the Specific Plan Area.

¹ Information regarding Priority Development Areas (PDAs) can be found on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's <https://mtc.ca.gov/planning/land-use/priority-development-areas-pdas>

² For this analysis, Cultural Significance means that the business advances art and culture; meets a specific need for a particular group; or may hold a special meaning for a cultural group.

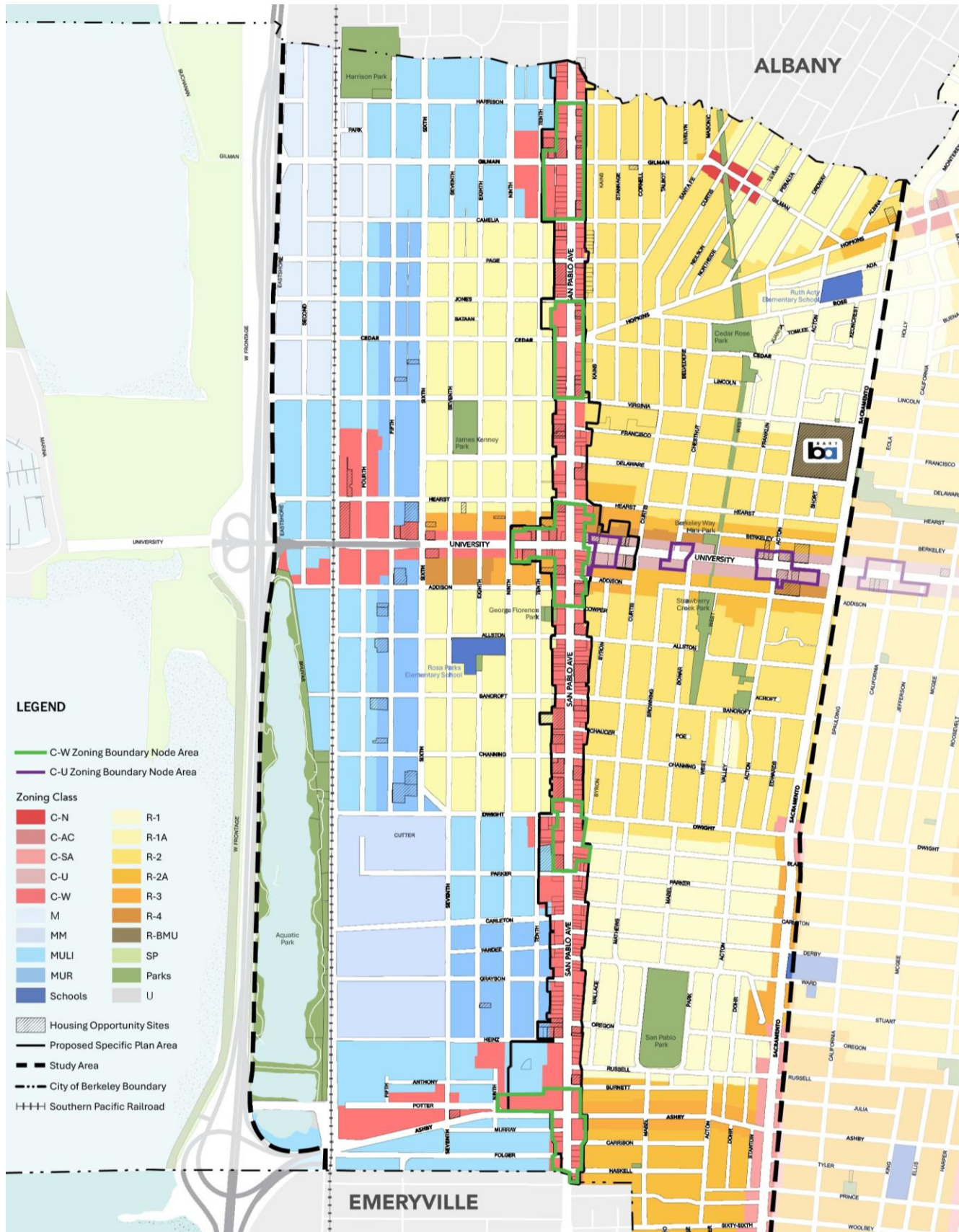


Figure 1. Proposed Specific Plan Area and Study Area. Source: City of Berkeley, 2023. Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), 2023.

Community Demographic and Housing Characteristics

Population Change

Berkeley's population grew by 9% from 2010 to 2020, to 122,580 people. In contrast, the Study Area grew by 16% in that time, to a population of 26,360 people, 22% of Berkeley's total population.³

The extent of population growth or decline varied in different parts of the city during this time. The western-most census tract in the city, portions of Downtown, and Southside experienced the largest population growth, increasing by 2,404, 1,019, and 2,877 people, respectively. The population of the western-most census tract in Berkeley, and in the Study Area, increased by 137%. See **Figure 2**. Other census tracts in the Study Area experienced population growth that was similar to other parts of the city.

Between 2010-2020, the number of housing units in Berkeley increased by 6% (2,877 units). New housing was primarily developed along major corridors, like San Pablo, University, Shattuck, Telegraph and Dwight Way. See **Figure 3**. The increased number of units in West Berkeley correlates with the population growth. The number of units in West Berkeley nearly doubled in the last decade, accounting for about one-fifth of the total housing growth in Berkeley.⁴

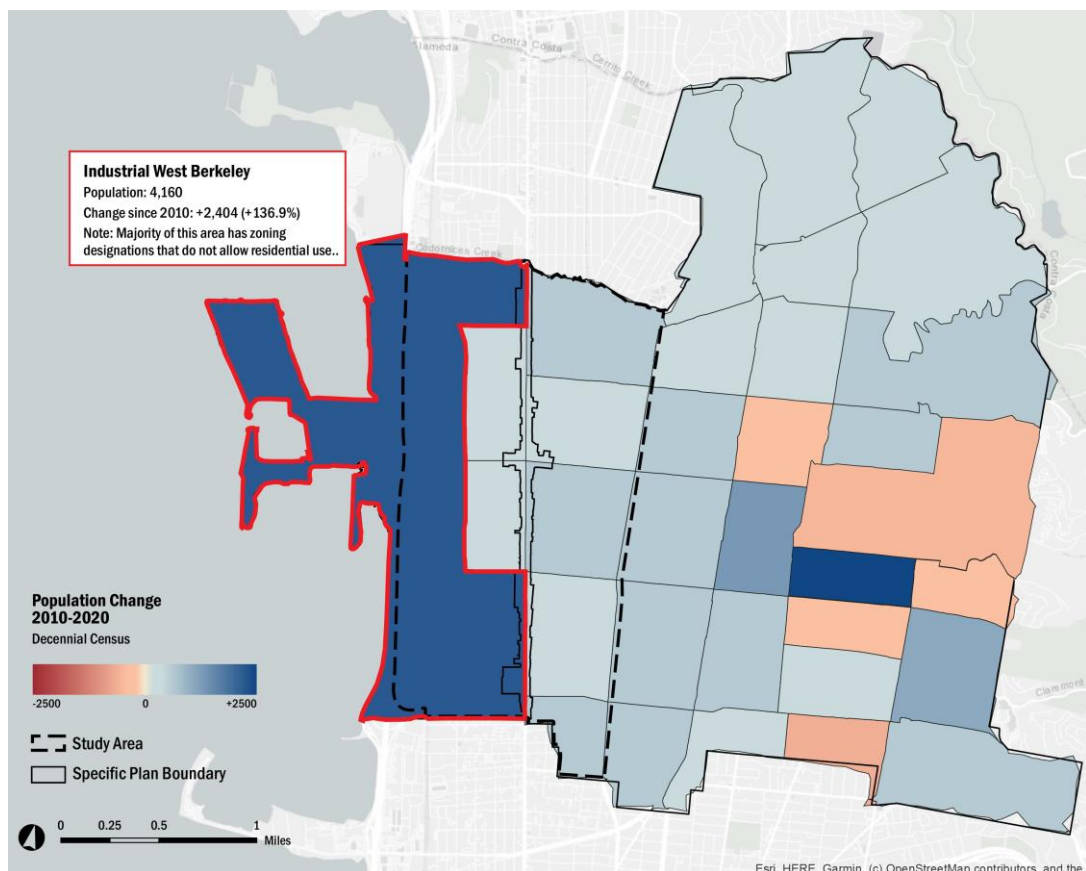


Figure 2. Population Change from 2010 to 2020. Source: United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2010, 2020, Table P1.

³ United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2010-2020, Table P1. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>.

⁴ Markovich, Ally. "A Changing Berkeley: 6 Maps Show How the Past Decade Has Remade the City." Berkeleyside, 18 Oct. 2022. <http://www.berkeleyside.org/2022/07/17/berkeley-population-demographics-housing-census-2020-maps>

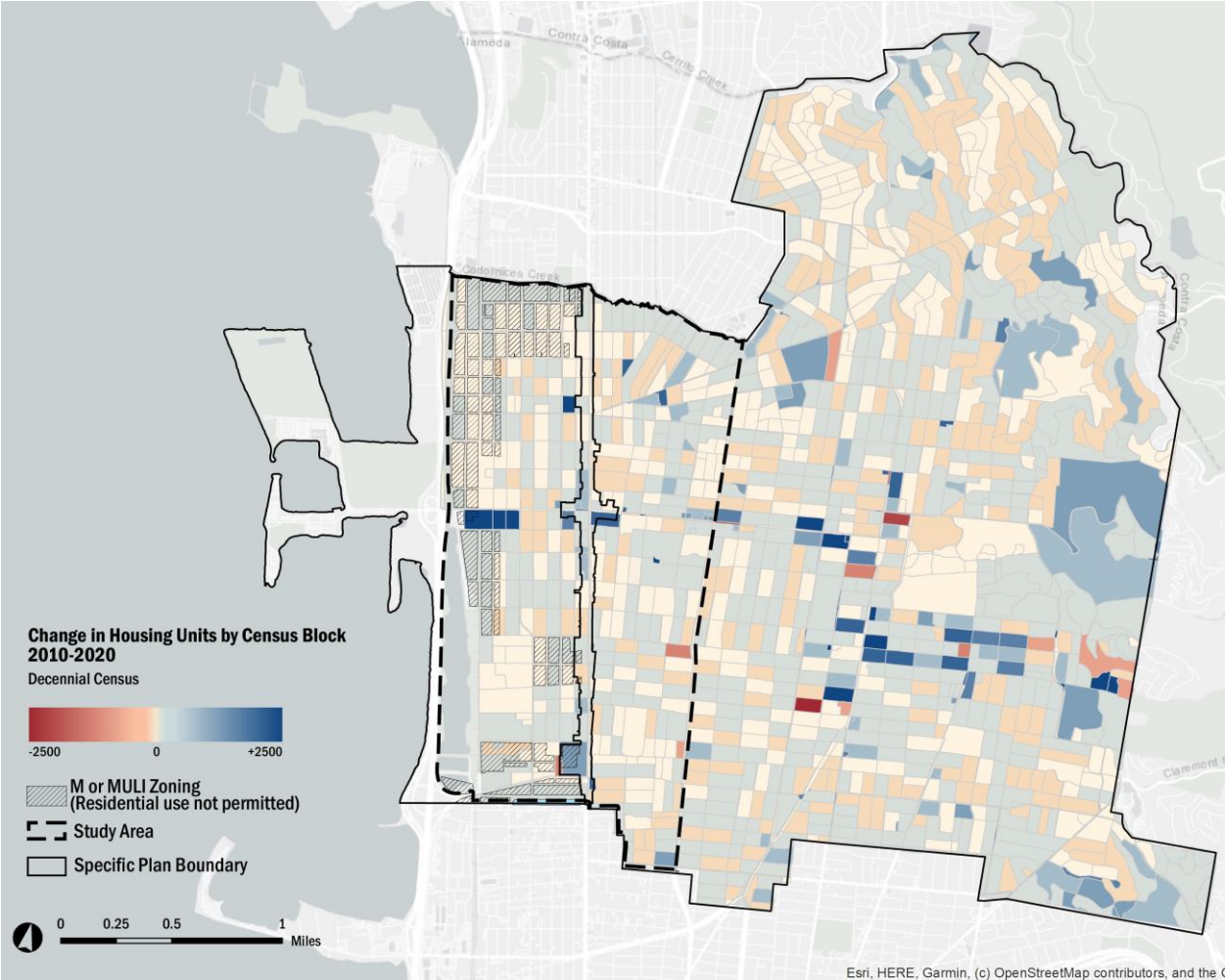


Figure 3. Change in Housing Units by Census Block, 2010 to 2020. Source: United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2010, 2020, Table H1.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Equity

Racial and Ethnic Population Change: The White population increased by over 3,900 (+45%) from 2000 to 2020. In the same time span, the Black population decreased by over 2,600 (-39%), while the population increase of Hispanic/ Latinx, Asians/ API, and other races was moderate.⁵ See **Figure 4**. Historical data shows citywide Black population decreased from its peak of 27,421 (23.5% of total population) in 1970 to 9,812 (8% of total population) in 2020. See **Figure 5**.

Changes in Racial and Ethnic Diversity: From 2000 to 2020, the Diversity Index⁶ for the Study Area decreased slightly from 72.8% to 71.6% while the city's Diversity Index increased from 63.9% to 67.6%. In comparison, the Alameda County's Diversity Index was 74.6% in 2020.⁷

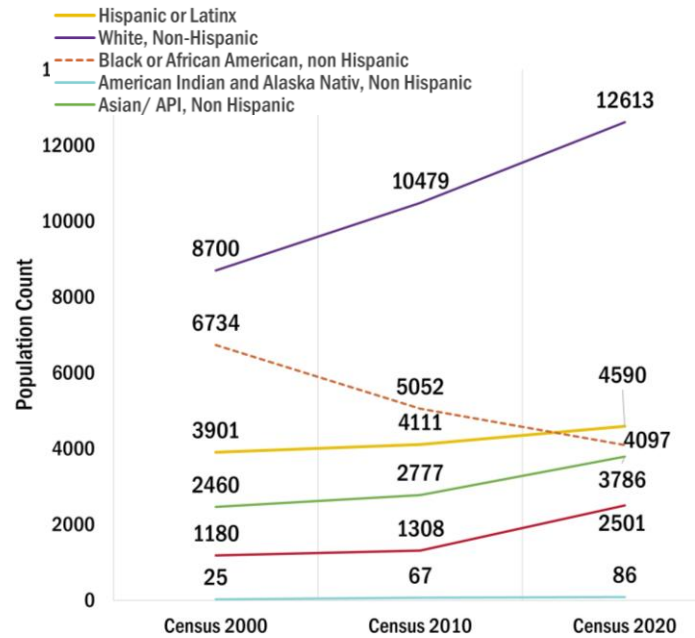


Figure 4. Population Shift by Race and Ethnicity in Study Boundary. Source: United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2010, Table P7. 2020, Table P1.

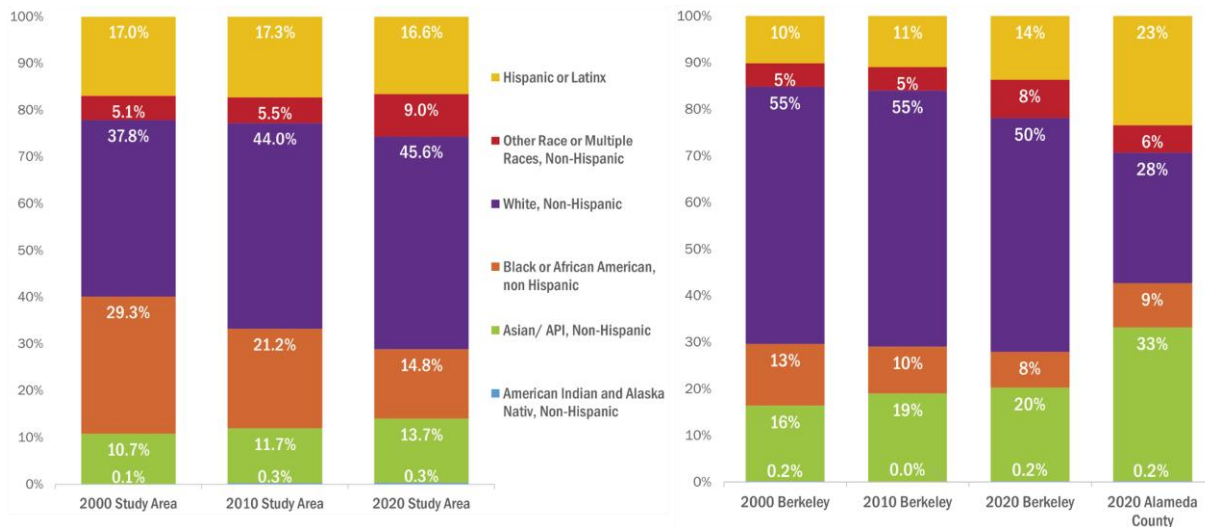


Figure 5. Comparison of Racial Composition in Study Area, Berkeley, and Alameda County. Source: United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2010, Table P7. 2020, Table P1.

Historic Redlining and Equity: In 1933, as part of the federal program and policies, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) was created to refinance home mortgages and expand home buying opportunities. HOLC is the originator of the color-coded mortgage security risk practice known as redlining and redlined the majority of the Specific Plan Area and Study Area. See **Figure 6**. This discriminatory practice withheld significant investment to areas deemed "D (Hazardous)," because of adjacent industrial areas, older buildings, and the presence of "undesirable populations" (e.g., Jewish, Asian, Mexican, and Black families). Due to this redlining practice, marginalized minority

⁵ United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2000, Table 7. 2010-2020 Table 9. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>.

⁶ A measure used by the U.S. Census Bureau that calculates the probability of two random people, picked from a population, are from different Racial and Ethnic Groups. The higher the number, the more diverse a population is.

⁷ United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2000, Table 7. 2010-2020 Table 9. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>.

communities were restricted to south and west Berkeley. Although effectively eliminated by 1966 by the Supreme Court, impacts are still seen today as areas that were redlined are often found to be more prone to racial and economic segregation, economic inequality, risk of displacement, and associated conditions.

As a result of being historically underserved, the Study area is part of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)'s Equity Priority Communities (EPCs)⁸. The EPC designation helps provide funding and assistance to census tracts that have a significant concentration of underserved populations, such as households with low incomes, limited English proficiency, zero-vehicle households, seniors 75 years and over, people with disability, single-parent families, and severely rent-burdened households, and people of color. EPC designations are used to make decisions about:

- Planning, including Plan Bay Area, the Transportation Improvement Program and equity analyses;
- Investment of funds, including the Active Transportation Program, OBAG Grants, Community-Based Transportation Planning Grants and the Lifeline Transportation Program; and
- Engagement with the community⁹

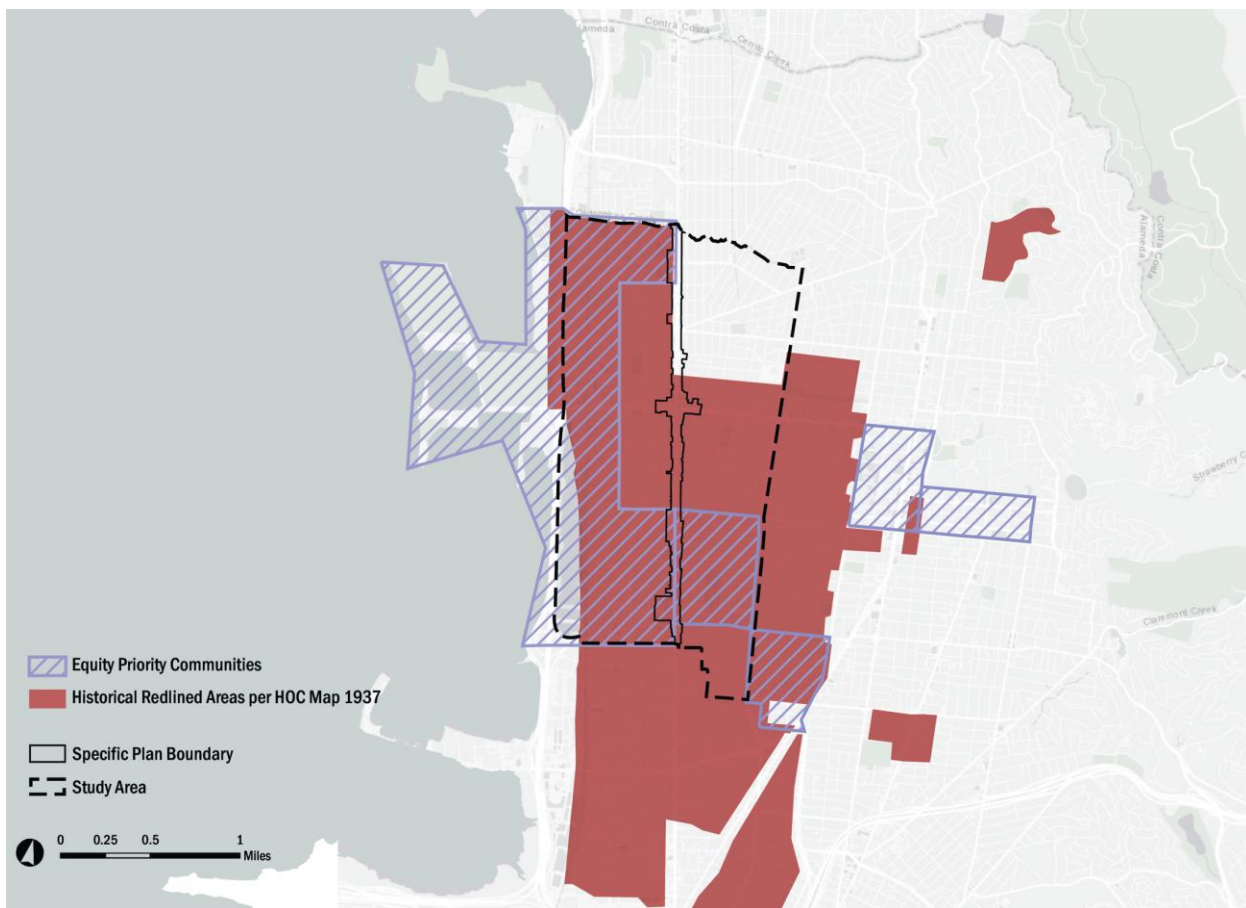


Figure 6. Equity Priority Communities and Historical Redlined Areas. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, *Mapping Redlining*, 2023. Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), *Equity Priority Communities*, 2021.

⁸ Equity Priority Communities (EPC) is a term defined by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) that identifies Bay Area communities that are or have historically been underserved. For more information, go to: <https://mtc.ca.gov/planning/transportation/access-equity-mobility/equity-priority-communities>.

⁹ More about EPC priorities in funding programs can be found on the MTC weblink above.

Household and Housing Conditions

Household Income Distribution

The neighborhoods in the Study Area are a mix of high- and low-income households. To better visualize the location of lower-income households, **Figure 7** shows the household income range of the lowest twenty percent in each census tract in Berkeley. Neighborhoods to the south and east of San Pablo Avenue have the lowest income quintiles ranging from \$15,000 - \$45,000. The tracts north of University Avenue display higher quintile ranges, with lowest quintiles over \$30,000.

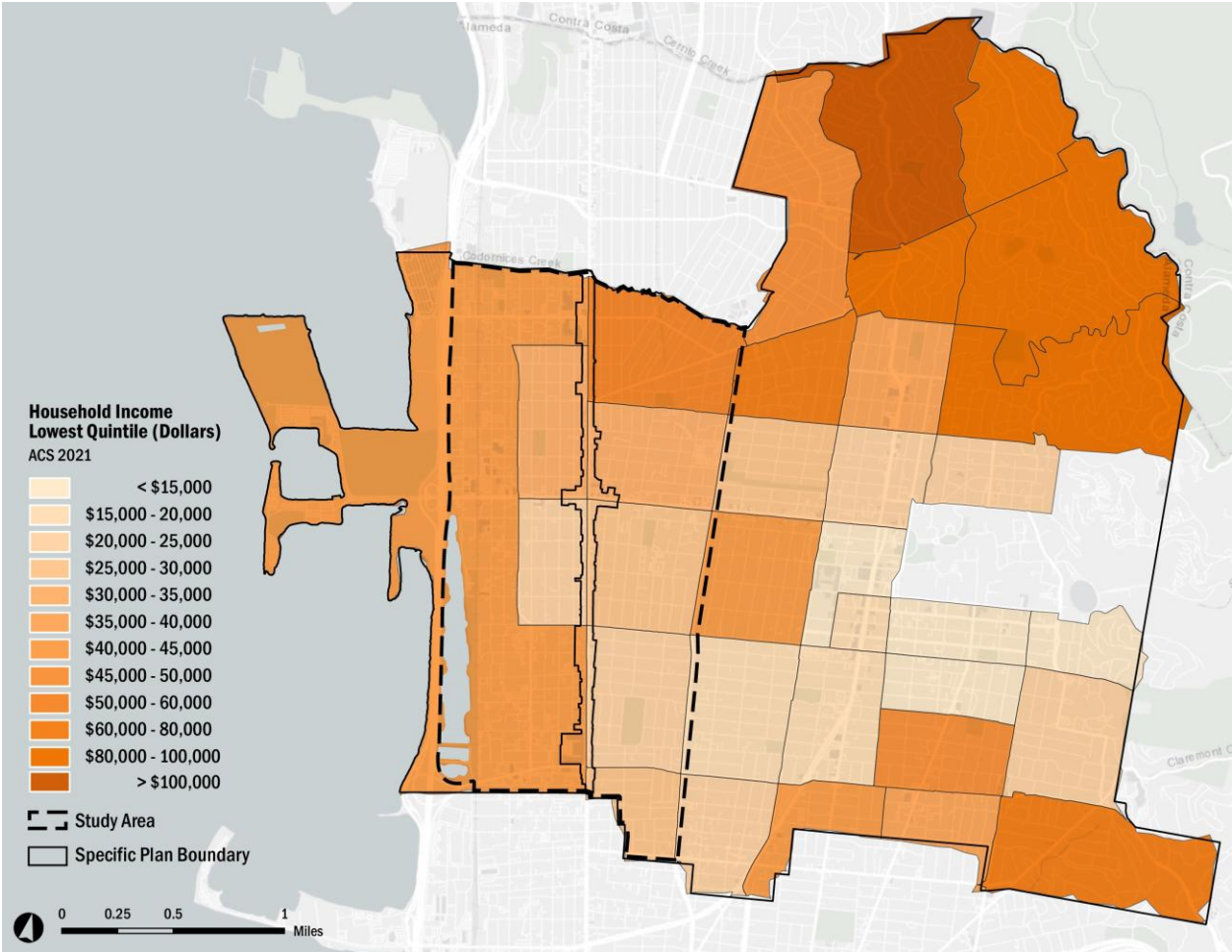


Figure 7. Household Income for Lowest Quintile. Source: United States Census Bureau. ACS. 2021, Table B19080.

Household Tenancy

Citywide Berkeley had more renter-occupied units (54%) than owner-occupied (46%) in 2021. The Study Area, with about 10,781 units, has a higher share of renters (55.3%) relative to owners (44.7%) compared to the Citywide share.¹⁰ See **Figure 8**.

Overcrowded Housing

U.S. Census Bureau defines overcrowded housing as units with 1.01 or more persons per room, excluding bathrooms and kitchens.¹¹ If the occupancy surpasses 1.5 persons per room, a unit is classified as severely overcrowded. In 2021, the Study Area contained 319 occupied units that were overcrowded. This accounts for 30% of overcrowded housing citywide, while only 17% of the city's total households and 22% of the city's population live in the Study Area.¹² In the Study Area, significantly more renter-occupied households (237) were overcrowded than owner-occupied (82 households).

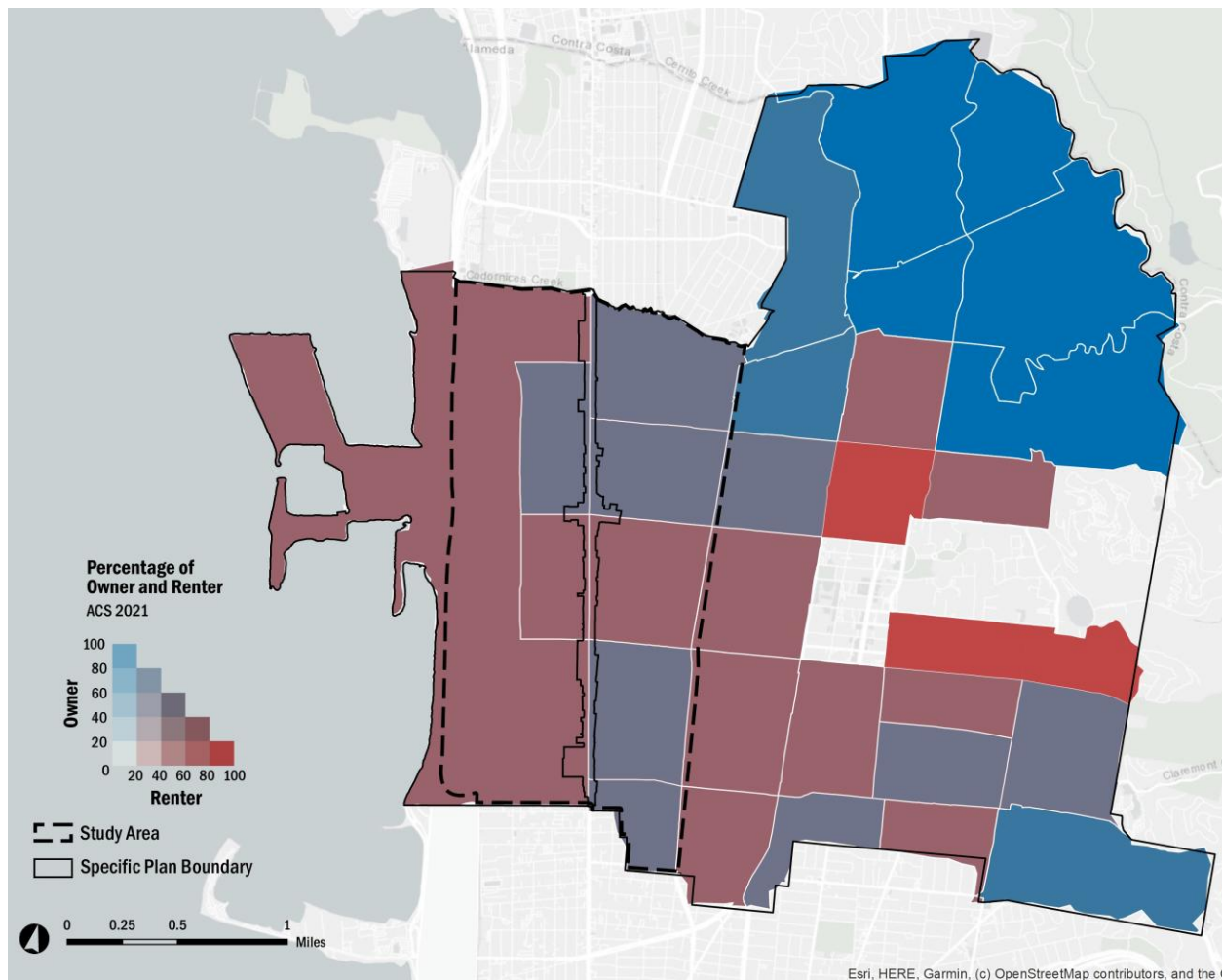


Figure 8. Mix of Households that Own or Rent in Berkeley. United States Census Bureau. ACS. 2021, Table DP04.

¹⁰ United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table B25014. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>.

¹¹ Definition of overcrowding and severe overcrowding are from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. For more information, go to: hcd.ca.gov/planning-and-community-development/housing-elements/building-blocks/overpayment-payment-and-overcrowding.

¹² United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table B25014. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>.

Household Income and Housing Cost

In 2021, the Study Area median household income (\$93,871) was about \$7,000 below the Berkeley median (\$101,048). The median household incomes increased by similar levels in both the Study Area (+79%) and Berkeley as whole (+78%) from 2010 to 2021.¹³

Renters at the southern end of the Study Area pay higher shares of their income on rent on average. In several neighborhoods on the northern end of the Study Area, the average tenant is paying less than 20% of their income in rent, while there are several neighborhoods on the south end of the Study Area where the average is above 50%.¹⁴ See **Figure 9**.

Owners in the area are spending a lower share of their income on housing costs, costs reflect sum of payments for mortgages, deeds of trust, contracts to purchase, or similar debts, on the property than renters are, on average.¹⁵ See **Figure 10**.

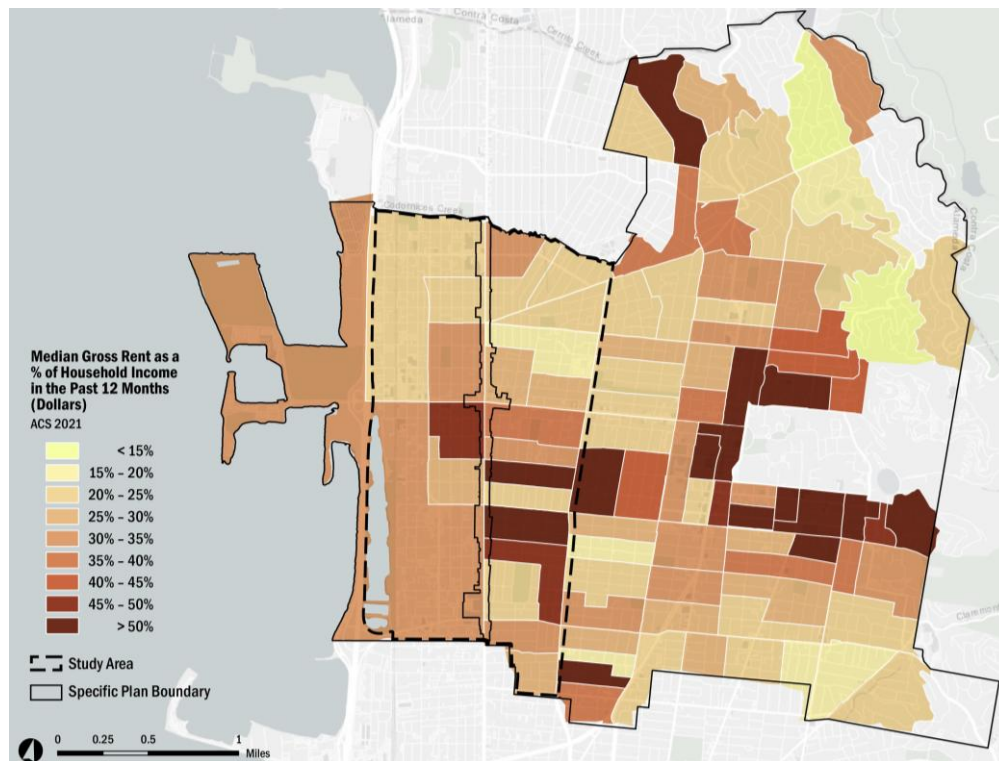


Figure 9. Median Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income. Source: United States Census Bureau. ACS. 2021, Table B25071.

¹³ United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table S2503. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>.

¹⁴ United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table B25071. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>.

¹⁵ United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table B25092. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>.

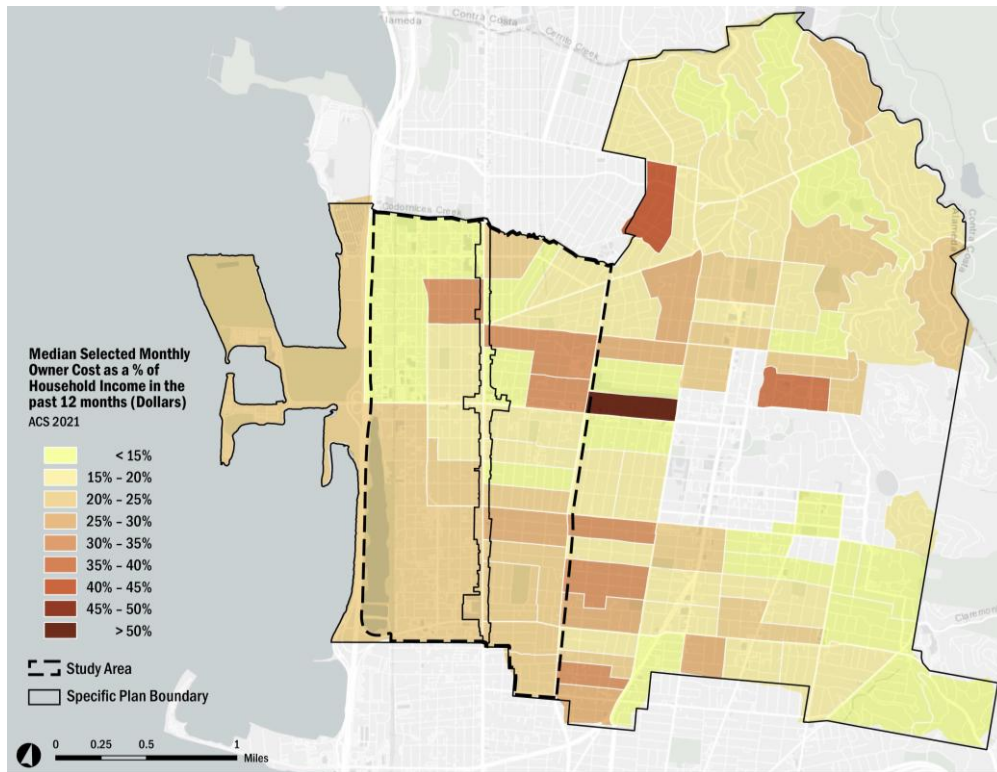


Figure 10. Median Selected Monthly Owner Cost as a Percentage of Household Income.¹⁶
Source: United States Census Bureau. ACS. 2021, Table B25092.

Housing Cost Burden

In the Study Area, more than half of tenants are cost-burdened,¹⁷ meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their gross household income on rent and utilities. Of those tenants, 26% are severely cost-burdened, meaning they are spending more than 50 percent of their income.¹⁸

For severely cost-burdened households (1,513 households), 73 percent (1,118 households) earn less than \$35,000 and spend more than 50 percent of their income for rent.¹⁹

Household Eligibility for Affordable Housing

Approximately half of Study Area households earn less than 80 percent of Area Median Income and a third earn less than 50 percent of Area Median Income.²⁰ These households would likely be eligible for affordable housing.

¹⁶ "Selected Monthly Owner Cost" includes recurring payments like debt (if any), taxes, insurance and utilities. For more information on definition and methodology, please visit: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/HSG650221>

¹⁷ Definition of cost-burden and severe cost-burden are from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. For more information, go to: hcd.ca.gov/planning-and-community-development/housing-elements/building-blocks/overpayment-payment-and-overcrowding.

¹⁸ United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table B25074. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>

¹⁹ United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table B25074. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>

²⁰ United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table B19001 [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>. United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, Income Limits, 2021[Online] <https://data.HUD.gov/> Street Level Advisors calculations.

Infrastructure Assessment

Infrastructure includes utility service for domestic water, wastewater, stormwater, telecommunications, electricity, and natural gas. According to the 2023-2031 Housing Element Update Environmental Impact Report (EIR), existing utility systems for domestic water, wastewater, stormwater, telecommunications, electricity, and natural gas facilities in Berkeley have sufficient capacity to serve the planned housing developments. *Relocation or construction of new or expanded facilities resulting in significant environmental impacts would not occur, and adequate wastewater capacity exists to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments. Impacts would be less than significant.*²¹

Residential capacity based on existing zoning assumes 2,588 existing units in the Specific Plan Area and between 3,700 to 5,350 future multifamily units in the next 8 years. Existing versus future capacity for non-residential use is not anticipated to have much effect on utility upgrade needs. The Housing Element Update EIR studied the sites inventory including a total of 15,153 units. The increase in units in the San Pablo Specific Plan area is negligible in relation to the required infrastructure needs, however some localized improvements will likely be required.

- Localized upsizing of domestic water and wastewater in San Pablo Avenue may be necessary to accommodate the additional units. The City of Berkeley and EBMUD typically require individual developments to make these upgrades.
- Stormwater from new development will be required to comply with the Municipal Regional Stormwater NPDES Permit (MRP) requirements. Rainwater management including bioswales, permeable paving, underground stormwater storage and/ or rain gardens will be required.
- Telecommunications, electricity and natural gas upgrades will continue to be available from the providers. Typically, the utility companies will upgrade facilities as needed.
- Lighting is provided by the City's Public Works Department.

The Specific Plan process includes consideration of corridor wide and/or district level infrastructure improvements. This approach could result in efficiencies, multiple benefits, and could spread the cost of localized infrastructure upgrades over multiple developments.

²¹ City of Berkeley [2023-2031 Housing Element Update, Draft Environmental Impact Report](#); City of Berkeley; August 2022, page ES-21.

Mobility Conditions, Projects, and Planning

Transportation Focus of the Specific Plan

San Pablo Avenue is a California state highway (State Route 123) and improvements within the street right of way require approval by Caltrans. The City of Berkeley is responsible for maintenance of the sidewalks and medians, including street trees and landscaping.

The Specific Plan is not making transportation improvements to San Pablo Avenue, because the Alameda Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC) has completed a multimodal planning project for San Pablo Avenue throughout Alameda County. The project has led to three projects that will result in construction of safety improvements for all users, bus stop improvements, and parallel bicycle facility improvements, as well as a short segment of bicycle and bus lanes on the southern end of San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley.

The Specific Plan effort focused on the public realm of the sidewalks along San Pablo Avenue, parking management, and other transportation improvements that are not being addressed through the Alameda CTC efforts.

Traffic Volumes

Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes along San Pablo Avenue average about 20,000 vehicles per day in Berkeley. In addition to serving as a major thoroughfare for local travel and providing access to local businesses and residents, San Pablo Avenue also is an alternative route for travelers on I-80 during periods of heavy freeway congestion. Cross streets providing interstate access include Gilman Street (9,000 AADT), University Avenue (19,000 AADT), and Ashby Avenue (42,000 AADT).²²

Transit Network

AC Transit – AC Transit provides bus service throughout western Alameda County and Contra Costa County and operates 12 bus routes within the study area that provides direct access to the plan area. See **Table 1** and **Figure 11**. AC Transit developed a new network in response to changing travel patterns through the AC Transit Realign Plan, which was implemented in August 2025. The Realign Plan did not significantly alter the service within the Specific Plan Area.

Table 1: AC Transit Service Summary (August 2023)

Line	Route	Nearest Bus Stops	Weekday		Weekend	
			Hours	Headway	Hours	Headway
12	MLK Jr. – Temescal – Grand	On Gilman Street between San Pablo Avenue and Tenth Street	5:55 AM – 12:55 AM	20 min	6:00 AM – 12:00 AM	30 min
36	Dwight – Shellmound – Adeline	On Dwight Way between Tenth Byron Streets	5:50 AM – 12:35 AM	30 min	5:50 AM – 12:30 AM	30 min
51B	University – College – Rockridge	On University Avenue between Tenth and Curtis Streets	4:55 AM – 12:20 AM	15 min	5:00 AM – 12:20 AM	15 min
52	UC Village – Cedar – UC Campus	On San Pablo Avenue between Albany City Limit and Cedar Street	6:00 AM – 11:45 PM	15 min	8:15 AM – 8:25 PM	20 min

²² San Pablo and Ashby Avenue data source – Caltrans Traffic Census Program, 2021; Gilman Street data source – collected for the Gilman Gateway rezoning project, 2019; and University Avenue data source: collected for the San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project, 2018.

Line	Route	Nearest Bus Stops	Weekday		Weekend	
			Hours	Headway	Hours	Headway
72 / 72M	Hilltop – CCC – San Pablo / Macdonald – San Pablo	Along entire length of San Pablo Avenue	4:45 AM – 1:20 AM	15 min	4:55 AM – 1:45 AM	20 min
72L	San Pablo Rapid	Along entire length of San Pablo Avenue	6:00 AM – 8:15 PM	30 min	7:00 AM – 7:55 PM	30 min
800	Richmond – Oakland Transbay All Nighter	On University Avenue at San Pablo Avenue	12:20 AM – 7:25 AM	30 min	12:20 AM – 7:25 AM	30 min
802	San Pablo All Nighter	On San Pablo Avenue between University Avenue and Oakland City Limit	12:40 AM – 5:35 AM	60 min	12:40 AM – 5:35 AM	60 min
G	Colusa – Solano Transbay	On San Pablo Avenue between Albany City Limit and University Avenue	7:00 AM – 9:45 AM, 4:10 PM – 6:50 PM	30 – 60 min	No service	No service
FS	Shattuck – University Transbay	On University Avenue at San Pablo Avenue	6:10 AM – 8:30 AM, 4:30 PM – 7:25 PM	90+ min	No service	No service
J	Sacramento – Christie Transbay	On Ashby Avenue at San Pablo Avenue	7:10 AM – 10:10 AM, 4:45 PM – 7:00 PM	20 – 60 min	No service	No service

Source: AC Transit website, August 2025 Schedules; Fehr & Peers, CD+A, 2025.

West Berkeley Shuttle – This is a free shuttle funded by the Berkeley Gateway Transportation Management Association that provides transit connections between the Ashby BART station and major employment centers in West Berkeley. The shuttle operates on weekdays from 6:00 AM to 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM with approximately 30-minute headways. The West Berkeley Shuttle does not currently have any stops on San Pablo Avenue or in the Specific Plan Area. See **Figure 11** illustrates the route alignment.

Bear Transit – This is UC Berkeley’s shuttle system, primarily providing service between Campus Park, Downtown Berkeley, and Berkeley Hills. Bear Transit is free for the UC Berkeley community and members of the public may ride for a \$1 fare. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bear Transit provided service to the plan area on the Campus Shared Services (CSS Line). The CSS line operated between the North Berkeley BART Station and the UC Berkeley Shared Services Building on 4th Street via Delaware Street, San Pablo Avenue, Cedar Street, and Virginia Street.

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBL) Shuttle – The LBL operates a free shuttle service for LBL employees and guests between LBL and North Berkeley BART and other destinations in West and North Berkeley. The shuttle provides morning service between 6:00AM and 11:00AM and afternoon service between 3:30PM and 7:30PM. The shuttle operates at 60-minute headways during both periods. The shuttle stops along San Pablo Avenue at Cedar Street, Gilman Street, and Buchanan Street during both morning and afternoon service.

Other Existing and Planned Shuttle Services – In addition to the shuttles described above, Kaiser Permanente used to operate an employee shuttle between the North Berkeley BART Station and its facility on Second Street at Virginia Street in West Berkeley prior to the pandemic. Although this shuttle crossed San Pablo Avenue, they did not directly serve the Specific Plan Area.

The Berkeley Commons Project (600 Addison Street), and TheLAB (747 Bancroft Way) are recently approved developments in West Berkeley that are conditioned to operate shuttles between the North Berkeley BART Station

and their respective sites. Although these shuttles would cross San Pablo Avenue, they are not expected to directly serve the Specific Plan Area.

BART – BART provides regional commuter rail transit in Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties. As of August 2023, BART trains operate weekdays from 5:00 AM to 2:00 AM, Saturdays from 6:00 AM to 2:00 AM, and Sundays from 8:00 AM to 2:00 AM. The North Berkeley, the Downtown Berkeley, and the Ashby BART stations are located to the east of San Pablo Avenue. **See Figure 11.**

These stations are served by the Richmond-Berryessa-North San José (orange) and Richmond-Millbrae/SFO (red) lines. Other destinations in the BART system can be reached by transferring at stations in Oakland. As of August 2023, the Berryessa-North San José line provides service every 15 minutes on weekdays and every 30 minutes on Saturdays, Sundays, and Holidays. The Richmond-Millbrae/SFO line provides service every 15 minutes on weekdays and every 30 minutes on Saturdays, Sundays, and Holidays. In June 2023, there were approximately 3,400, 8,900, and 3,700 entries and exits on an average weekday from the North Berkeley, Downtown Berkeley, and Ashby BART stations, respectively.²³

Capitol Corridor - Amtrak's Capitol Corridor route operates between San Jose and Sacramento and stops at the Berkeley Rail Station. The station is located under the University Avenue overpass, about 0.5 miles west of San Pablo Avenue. There are 12 daily weekday departures and arrivals and 11 daily weekend departures and arrivals per direction at the Berkeley Station.²⁴ In FY2021, the station served about 26,000 rail passengers.²⁵ The Amtrak station is served by AC Transit Line 51B, with additional bus service nearby. The station provides basic amenities, including outside seating and automobile and bicycle parking.

²³ [Bay Area Rapid Transit 2019 Monthly Ridership Reports.](#)

²⁴ [Amtrak Capitol Corridor Schedule.](#)

²⁵ [Amtrak California Fact Sheet, Fiscal Year 2021.](#)

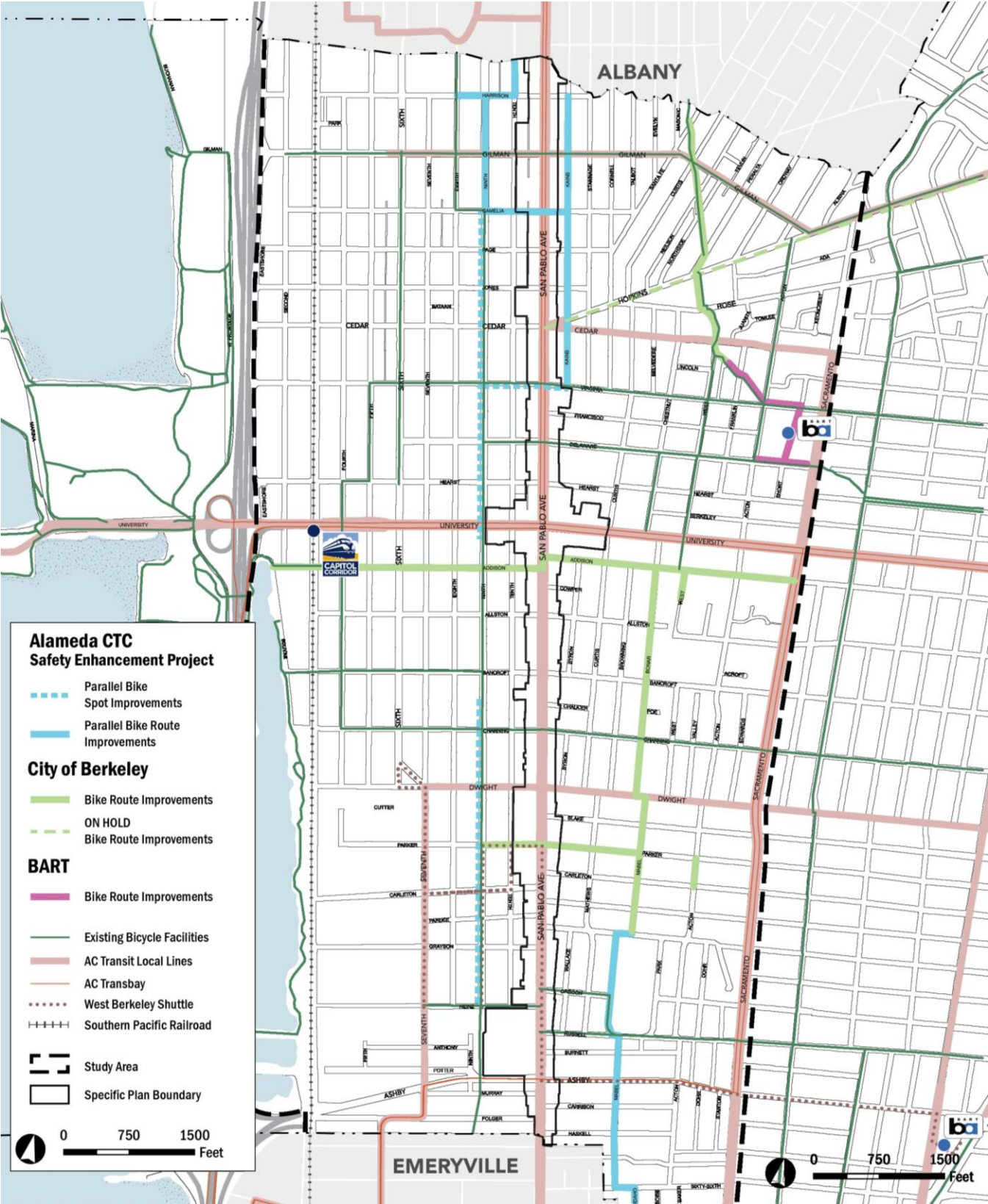


Figure 11. Transit Lines and Bicycle Routes. Source: City of Berkeley, Alameda CTC, and Fehr & Peers, 2023.

Transit-First Policy Implementation Plan – December 2022

This plan provides policies and guidelines for implementing the City’s Transit-First Policy (Berkeley General Plan Policy T-4) and for future planning for the City’s existing transit priority corridors. The plan aligns with the City’s Climate Action Plan goals to prioritize transit over single-occupant vehicles and reduce emissions. Objectives of the plan include improving transit efficiency, reliability, and accessibility, increasing transit ridership, and prioritizing transit corridors.

It identifies San Pablo Avenue as a Primary Transit Route and a corridor for future study of transit infrastructure needs based on the AC Transit Major Corridors Study (2016). San Pablo Avenue Corridor together with the Telegraph and University Avenue Corridors are AC Transit designated future Bus Rapid Transit Corridors and part of the AC Transit Long-Term Improvements (by 2040) plan.

The document describes Alameda CTC’s San Pablo Corridor Project as the lead project for the design of future transit improvements to San Pablo Avenue, and recommends continuing work with Alameda CTC, Caltrans, and neighboring cities to develop a long-term implementation plan for the whole corridor to meet projected transit needs of planned land uses and anticipated growth of housing.

Council Referral for BRT in Berkeley

In September 2023, the City Council referred to the City Manager to move forward with a feasibility analysis and community engagement process to develop options for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) for AC Transit’s 51B route, including on University Avenue which is designated a Primary Transit Route by AC Transit through their Major Corridors Study.

If the City continues to pursue implementation of BRT service on University Avenue to Downtown this would improve transit access from the San Pablo Specific Plan Area to Downtown, UC Berkeley, BART, and other locations proximate to University Avenue. It would also reinforce the importance of the San Pablo Avenue and University Avenue Node.

Transportation Safety

The entire length of San Pablo Avenue is included in the City of Berkeley’s High-Injury Network. Between 2017 and 2021, there were 190 collisions on San Pablo Avenue that resulted in an injury or death, representing 7% of the Berkeley total.²⁶

Vision Zero Action Plan - This plan was approved March 10, 2019, and describes the goal to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries in Berkeley by 2028 through data-driven engineering strategies. The plan prioritizes infrastructure within an Equity Priority Area, which includes much of the Study Area. Between 2008 and 2018, 46% of severe and fatal collisions within Berkeley occurred within the EPA area. The plan also identifies San Pablo Avenue as a High-Injury Street, the streets in Berkeley with the most severe injury or fatality collisions between 2008 and 2018. During that time, there were multiple collisions on San Pablo Avenue that resulted in severe injury to pedestrians and vehicle occupants, but no reported fatalities.

Implementation of the Alameda CTC San Pablo Corridor Project’s Safety Enhancements Project and the bike infrastructure projects are described below. This work will improve traffic calming and pedestrian safety and support the goals of the Vision Zero Action Plan.

Ongoing Projects, Approved Plans and Future Planning

Current City, countywide, and regional action plans focus on multimodal strategies to achieve improvements for all modes of transportation in San Pablo Specific Plan and Study Areas. The alignments of these improvement projects are mapped in **Figure 11**.

²⁶ Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) via Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS), 2017-2021.

San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project – This project is led by the Alameda County Transportation Commission (“Alameda CTC”) and consists of three near-term projects in the Specific Plan Area to improve safety and transit reliability along the San Pablo Avenue Corridor. Additional information about these projects can be found on the Alameda CTC web site.²⁷

- The **Safety Enhancements Project** will construct improvements for pedestrians and cyclists to cross San Pablo Avenue more safely and improve transit speed and reliability along San Pablo Avenue. Transit improvements include bus stop bulb-outs for Rapid Bus stops, lighting upgrades, and some bus stop relocations to improve bus operations. Within Berkeley, improvements will extend between Heinz Avenue and the northern city limit.
- The **Parallel Bike Improvement Project** will construct bike safety and connectivity improvements along streets parallel to and across San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley, Albany, and Oakland. Improvements on parallel streets will consist of diverters, traffic circles, modifications to existing stop controls, traffic humps, and vertical separation for bicycles.
- The **Bus and Bike Lanes Project** located primarily within the Cities of Oakland and Emeryville will convert one travel lane in each direction on San Pablo Avenue to a bus-only lane and convert on-street parking lanes to protected bike lanes. In Berkeley, the Project’s bicycle improvements will extend along San Pablo Avenue from the southern city limit to Heinz Avenue, a distance of approximately 0.25 miles, and the bus improvements will end at the Ashby Avenue intersection.

Other multimodal projects – The City is moving forward with implementation of several projects identified in the 2017 Bike Plan within the Study Area. These, combined with the Alameda CTC projects, will improve accessibility and safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, enhancing connectivity between the Specific Plan Area and the surrounding Study Area. The project include:

- **Ohlone Greenway Safety Improvements Project** – This project will improve a portion of the existing pathway from Virginia Gardens to the crossing of Santa Fe Avenue. The project is in conceptual design and has completed initial public engagement. Design is expected to be completed in mid-2024 with construction occurring soon after, assuming necessary additional funds are secured.
- **Hopkins Corridor Traffic and Placemaking Study** – A small portion of this project, from Gilman Street to Sacramento Street is within the Study Area. The project’s goal is to make the street safer and more accessible for all modes of transportation. As of November 2023, the project is on hold due to City staffing constraints and a final decision by City Council regarding project design.
- **West Hopkins Corridor Street Rehabilitation Project** – This project includes Hopkins Street from Gilman Street to San Pablo Avenue. Similar to the other Hopkins Study, as of November 2023, the project is on hold.
- **Parker-Addison Mobility and Safety Improvement Project** – This project will provide bike boulevard and associated improvements to connect from the West Street multiuse pathway to San Pablo Park via Bonar and Mabel Streets. It will also improve Parker Street to connect with the 9th Street Bike Boulevard. Design is nearly complete and construction is expected to occur in 2024.
- **Addison Street Bicycle Boulevard Project** – This project has received funding, but design and public involvement has not yet begun. The project’s goal is to make improvements to the Addison Street Bicycle Boulevard from Aquatic Park to Sacramento Street.
- **North Berkeley Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Improvements** – This is a BART project that is under construction and is improving bicycle and pedestrian access at and around the North Berkeley BART Station to improve connectivity from the Ohlone Greenway at Virginia Gardens to the crossing and connection to the Ohlone Greenway at Sacramento Street.

²⁷ General website for the Alameda CTC project can be found here <https://www.alamedactc.org/programs-projects/multimodal-arterial-roads/sanpabloave>. Boards illustrating the locations for specific improvements for the Safety Enhancement and Parallel Bike Improvement Projects can be found on the “Key Materials” page.

Land Use Planning Policies and Gaps

Existing Land Use Policies and Standards

General Plan

The General Plan land use designation along the entire San Pablo Avenue frontage is **Avenue Commercial**. The land use designations for properties adjacent to the corridor include **Manufacturing**, **Manufacturing Mixed-Use**, **Low Medium Density Residential**, **Medium Density Residential**, and **High Density Residential**. The Study Area, beyond the Specific Plan Area, includes a broader range of land uses including **Neighborhood Commercial**, **Institutional**, **Open Space**, and **Low Density Residential** in addition to those above. See Figure 12.

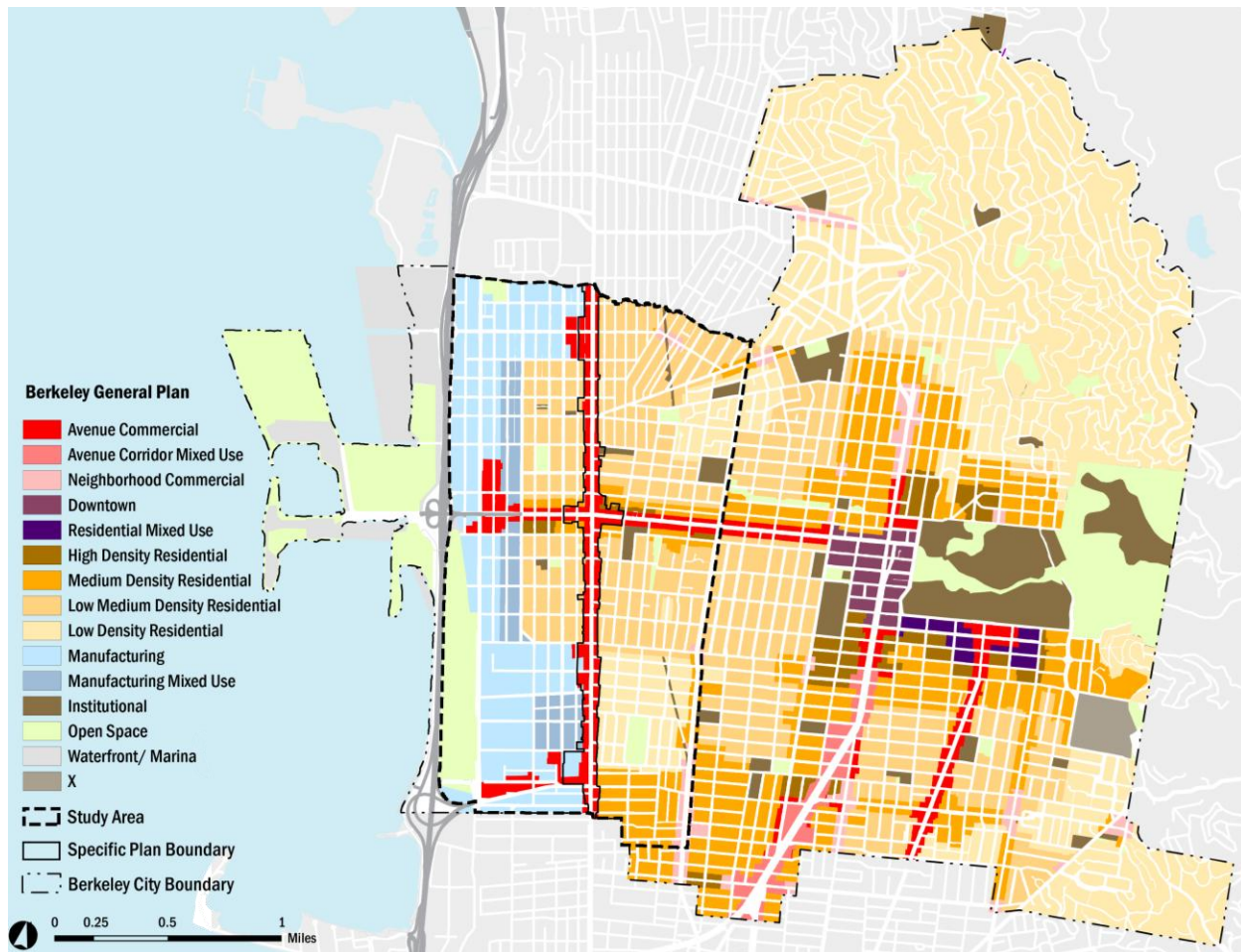


Figure 12. Berkeley General Plan. Source: City of Berkeley, 2023.

2023-2031 Housing Element Update

The City's 2023-2031 Housing Element Update (as amended on February 17, 2023) identifies the City's specific housing needs and outlines goals, policies, and programs to address them, including housing affordability and diversity. The City also provides annual reports on its progress toward meeting Housing Element Program objectives. Some key 2023-2031 Housing Element Update goals and programs include:

Housing Element Goals:

- **Goal A Housing Affordability:** Berkeley residents should have access to quality housing at a range of housing options and prices. Housing is least affordable for people at the lowest income levels, especially those with extremely low income, and City resources should focus on this area of need.
- **Goal B Housing Preservation & Improvement:** Existing housing should be maintained and improved. The City should promote efficiency in new and existing housing to improve building comfort and safety, reduce energy and water use and costs, provide quality and resilient housing, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Improvements that will prepare buildings for a major seismic event should be encouraged.
- **Goal C Housing Production:** Berkeley should provide adequate housing capacity to meet its current and future housing needs, including coordinating with the UC and other agencies. New housing should be developed to expand opportunities and choices to meet the diverse needs of all socioeconomic segments of the community, and should be safe, healthy and resilient.
- **Goal D Special Needs Housing & Homelessness Prevention:** Berkeley should expand the supply of housing for special needs groups, including housing affordable to those with extremely low incomes.
- **Goal E Affirmatively Further Fair Housing:** The City should continue to take meaningful actions to affirmatively further fair housing choices in Berkeley.
- **Goal F Mitigate Governmental Constraints:** Berkeley should identify and mitigate barriers to the construction and improvement of housing.

Housing Element Programs:

- **Program 27 – Priority Development Areas (PDAs), Commercial and Transit Corridors.** In 2022, the City initiated the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan project to increase allowed densities, study design standards, public improvements, and mechanisms to incentivize affordable housing. The plan will also coordinate with other PDAs and commercial corridors to expand opportunities along transit corridors.²⁸
- **Program 1 - Affordable Housing Berkeley.** The Berkeley Housing Authority (BHA) established Affordable Housing Berkeley Inc., as a non-profit entity to act as the development arm of the BHA and produce affordable housing units in Berkeley. In October 2023, the BHA approved a strategic plan for Affordable Housing Berkeley Inc., which is geared towards small housing purchase of up to seven building units.
- **Program 2 – Housing Choice Vouchers.** The City assists up to 2,000 households by providing Housing Choice Vouchers, Project-based Section 8 Vouchers, Moderate Rehabilitation (SROs), Emergency Housing Vouchers, Mainstream Voucher Program, and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing. In 2024, BHA housed an average of 1,759 households and is continuously issuing new vouchers to families on the waitlist.
- **Program 4 – Housing Trust Fund.** Berkeley's Housing Trust Fund (HTF) pools funds for affordable housing construction from a variety of sources with different requirements, and makes them available to developers through a single application process.
- **Program 5 – Preservation of At-Risk Housing.** The City will monitor and assist in preserving deed-restricted housing.
- **Program 10 - Housing Preference Policies.** In July 2023, Berkeley adopted a policy to provide a preference for current residents and descendants of residents of the city's historically redlined areas. Households with ties to redlined areas receive priority in leasing new City funded or regulated affordable units.
- **Program 11 – Rental Assistance.** The City utilizes CDBG and local Measure P funding to contract with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to provide supportive services. These services help stabilize households in rental assistance programs and to move unhoused community members into permanent supportive housing.
- **Program 12 – Workforce Housing.** Support local efforts to expand the construction of workforce housing that is affordable to households earning between 60 and 120 percent of area median income (AMI). In March

²⁸ City of Berkeley, 2025. Housing Element and General Plan Annual Progress Report. Available at: <https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2025-03-28%20%20Housing%20Element%20and%20General%20Plan%20Annual%20Progress%20Reports.pdf>

2023, the City achieved its goal of entitling 110 affordable units, with a preference for Berkeley Unified School District employees.²⁹

- **Program 14 – Housing for Homeless Persons with Disabilities.** provide local subsidy to Resources for Community Development (RCD) for a 119-unit very low income development for households earning between 10 and 50 percent AMI (Supportive Housing in People’s Park) with at least 50 percent of the units dedicated to previously unhoused residents with mental health conditions.

The full list of Goals, Policies and Programs is available in the City’s Housing Element Update. However, as illustrated here, between current State Law and the City’s Housing Element, there is a strong foundation for affordable housing production throughout Berkeley, including within the Specific Plan Area.

Zoning

As noted above, properties fronting San Pablo Avenue are predominantly zoned West Berkeley Commercial (C-W). See **Figure 13**. The City’s zoning also delineates Commercial Designated Nodes along San Pablo and University Avenues. The **West Berkeley Commercial Designated Nodes** are located in areas around major intersections along San Pablo Avenue with Gilman Street, Cedar Street, University Avenue, Dwight Way, and Ashby Avenue. The intent of these nodes is to intensify retail, commercial, and mixed-use activity to support a strong commercial and pedestrian-oriented environment by requiring that ground floors be activated with select commercial uses. A **University Commercial District Node Area** is located on the east side of the University and San Pablo intersection. This designation requires that new residential uses be integrated with non-residential uses. The existing characteristics of the nodes are discussed below in the existing land use section.

Development Standards

The development standards and ground floor uses, as of November 2023, for the zoning districts within the Plan Area are outlined in **Appendix A1**.

Within the C-W and C-U zoning districts, which make up the majority of the Specific Plan Area, key standards include:

- Non-residential Floor Area Ratio (FAR)s of 2.2-3.0.
- Maximum height in the C-W district of three stories and 40 feet for residential- or commercial-only development, and four stories and 50 feet for mixed-use and live-work developments.
- Maximum height in the C-U of three stories and 36 feet for single use and mixed-use development *outside the nodes*, and four stories and 48 feet for mixed-use *within the nodes*. Residential-only development in the nodes requires a use permit.
- Ground floor commercial uses in the C-W zone are only required in the designated nodes. Outside the nodes, ground floor uses are permitted in accordance with Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) 23.204-1. Unpermitted uses in the C-W designated include open air markets, vehicle rentals and washes. Within both the C-U zone nodes and non-nodes areas, ground floor residential uses require a Use Permit.

²⁹ Ibid.

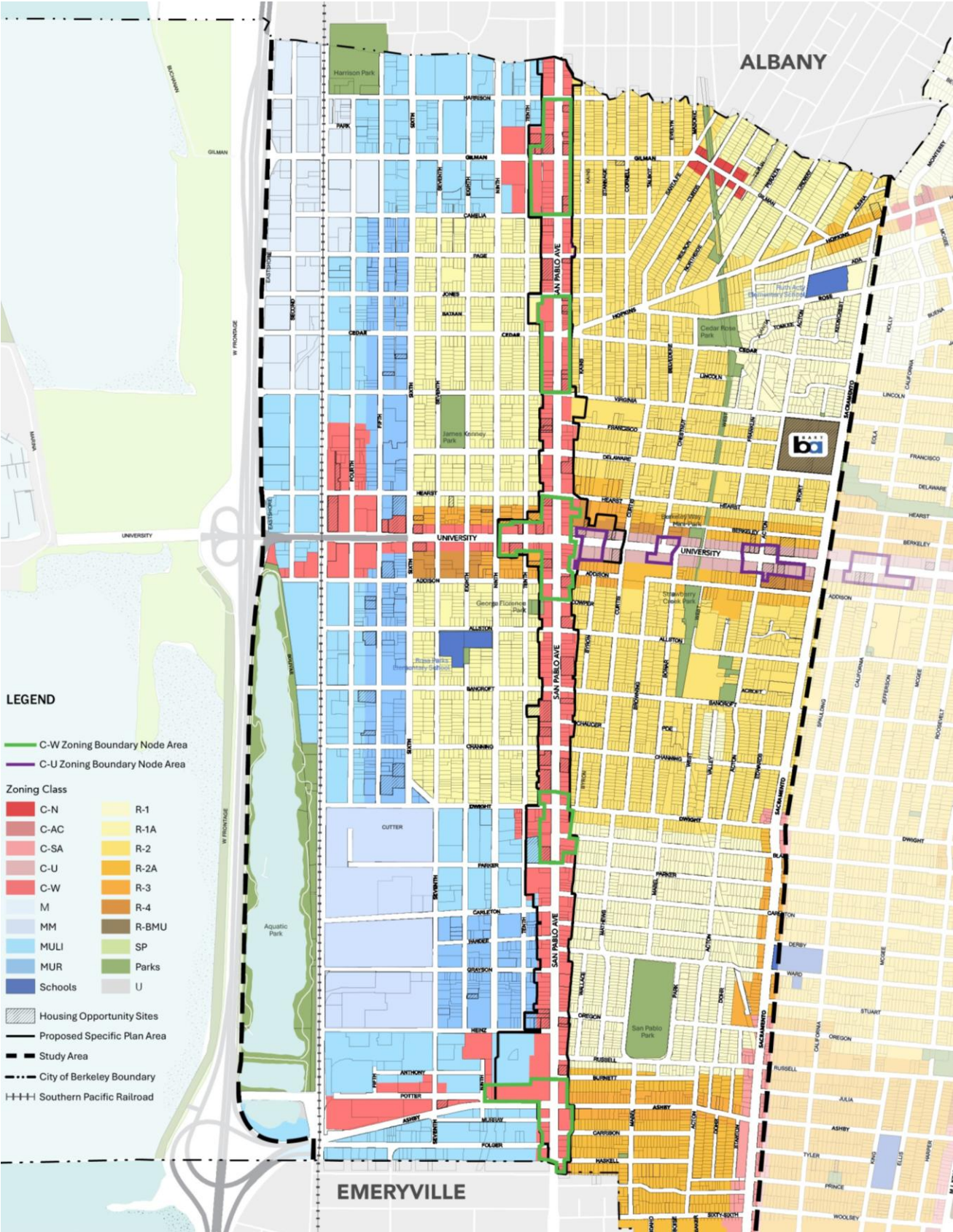


Figure 13. Zoning Map with designated nodes in the Specific Plan and Study Areas. Source: City of Berkeley

Permit Review Process

Ministerial and Discretionary Review Ministerial review is a process for development approval involving little or no personal judgement by the zoning officer or Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB). The zoning officer or ZAB ensures that the proposed development meets all the “objective zoning standards” and “objective design review standards” in effect at the time that the application is submitted but uses no special discretion or judgement in reaching a decision. In contrast, *Discretionary Review* is a process for development that is subject to public notice to neighbors, and in some cases, a public hearing.

Residential and Mixed-Use Review within the Specific Plan Area – As shown in the **Table 2** below, most of the residential and mixed-use development within the Specific Plan Area, which is predominantly zoned C-W, requires an Administrative Use Permit (AUP) or Use Permit (UP), which require discretionary review. Design Review is also required for projects in any non-residential zone, such as the C-W zoning district.

Recent state legislation has established and expanded eligibility for streamlined and/or ministerial review and approval for projects (see the overview of recent state laws below). Legislation includes changes to the development review process timeline and requirements, as well as limitations on the City’s discretion regarding project approval, imposing certain development standards, and the applicability of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Existing Land Use

The Study Area has a mix of existing land uses with a significant amount of single and multi-family residential that vary significantly in density and scale ranging from 6 du/acre for R-1 single-family to 75 du/acre for R-4 multi-family. Other uses include light industrial, commercial, including retail, vehicle repair, offices and food and alcohol service, personal and household services, retail financial services, and public and quasi-public uses.

Ground Floor Uses vary throughout the corridor. See **Figure 14**. Residential uses include multifamily, mixed-use, live-work, and a few single-family homes. Live-work spaces are a built space used or designed to be used both as a workplace and as a residence by one or more persons, and a mixed-use space is a use of a lot or building with two or more different land uses.³⁰ There are a variety of existing commercial ground floor uses, however the main uses include services, retail, and auto. A more detailed overview of the existing commercial uses is provided in the Commercial Risk Displacement section below.

Upper Floor Uses are primarily residential with some commercial office uses.

Table 2: Typical Permits Required, by Housing Type³¹ (Orange indicates design review required)

Housing Type	R-1	R-1A	R-2	R-2A	R-3	R-4	C-U	C-W	MU-LI	MU-R
Duplex	NP	UP	UP	UP	UP	UP	UP ¹	UP	NP	UP ²
Multi-family	NP	NP	UP	UP	UP	UP	UP ¹	UP	NP	AUP/UP ^{2,3}
Mixed-Use Projects	NP	NP	UP	UP	UP	UP	UP ¹	ZC/AUP/UP ⁴	NP	AUP/UP ^{2,3}
Live-work							ZC	AUP/UP ⁵	AUP/UP ⁶	AUP/UP ⁶
Group Living Accommodation	NP	NP	NP	NP	UP	UP	UP ¹	UP	NP	UP ²
ZC = Zoning Certificate, AUP = Administrative Use Permit, UP = Use Permit, NP = Not Permitted										

³⁰ City of Berkeley, 2023. Municipal Code section 23.502.020 Defined Terms.

³¹ City of Berkeley, 2023. 2023-2031 Housing Element Update, pg. 81-82.

¹ Residential uses must be part of a mixed-use development within University Avenue Node Areas; outside of Node Areas exclusively residential projects are permitted with a use permit.

² UP required within 150' of M or MM district or a construction product manufacturing or primary product manufacturing use. See BMC Section 23.206.090.B.8.

³ AUP required for 3-4 units; UP required for 5 or more units. See BMC Section 23.206.090.B.7. For mixed use projects, see also Section 23.206.090.B.9.

⁴ Permit required dependent on project size and other factors. See BMC Section 23.204.140.B.2.

⁵ AUP required when a project has 9 or fewer live/work units and does not involve conversion of an existing dwelling unit. All other live/work projects require a use permit. See BMC Section 23.312.030.C.3.

⁶ Permit required dependent on floor area, number of units, and other factors. See BMC Section 23.312.030.D.

Clusters of Related Uses – As seen in **Figure 14**, a mix of uses are distributed throughout San Pablo Specific Plan Area without distinct pattern or clustering of related uses. Many of the predominant land uses, such as auto, manufacturing, and services, are dispersed along the street, with the exception that retail uses are mostly located within the designated commercial nodes. Many businesses including a diverse range of restaurants, grocers, and retailers are distributed throughout the corridor (see Commercial Displacement Risk section below for additional detail on the existing commercial uses within the Specific Plan Area).

Designated Nodes – The West Berkeley Plan adopted in 1993 identified Commercial Nodes along San Pablo Avenue. The Berkeley Zoning Ordinance identifies these nodes as “Designated Nodes” within the C-W zone. Overall, the existing uses within the Designated Nodes are consistent with the C-W zoning allowed-uses.

The **Gilman Node** currently includes a substantial amount of retail including two clusters of commercial chain stores, some auto-oriented businesses, and restaurants, and other businesses. It lies adjacent to mixed-use light industrial zones to the west and residential neighborhoods to the southwest and the east. The 55-year-old KC’s BBQ restaurant closed their location in this node in April 2023.



Gilman intersection looking east.

The **Cedar Node** includes the Jones, a mixed-use project. The node accommodates small retail businesses, food establishments, and auto-related ventures. In 2022, the nearby former motels—Golden Bear Inn and Quality Inn were converted to permanent housing for persons experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Retail queues, such as for Acme Bread, add to pedestrian activity in the area. A long-time business, Animal Farm Discount Pet Foods and associated Wild Bird Annex closed in 2023.



Jones building to the northwest of the Cedar intersection.

The **University Node** has historically been an active area. In recent years the northern portion of the node has experienced business closures with several larger retail spaces and the former Wells Fargo Bank remaining unoccupied, while the southern section experiences more consistent use and pedestrian activity, thanks to its collection of restaurants, bars, and services. The eastern and western parts consist of a blend of South Asian businesses situated amidst surface parking lots. The Specific Plan boundary includes an adjacent University Avenue Node to the east of San Pablo Avenue.



University intersection looking northeast.

The **Dwight Node** is a walkable center of mixed commerce. Aside from the auto-oriented businesses in the northwest portion of the node, much of the node features restaurants, offices (including several non-profit organizations), and retail, as well as some multifamily buildings. The southern end of the node includes a Housing Element opportunity site (opportunity site #32).



Café Chiave at southwest corner of Dwight intersection.

The **Ashby Node** is characterized by two new housing developments that incorporate mixed-use retail spaces on their ground floors (3015 and 3006 San Pablo Avenue). The northern side of the node includes the historic Heinz building which features a substantial setback (approximately 32 feet) and a narrow sidewalk (approximately 6 feet). It includes office and institutional uses, such as the Kala Art Institute. Ashby Plaza includes Looking Glass Photo & Camera, which has been based in Berkeley for over 50 years. The former Walmart building on the northeast corner has been vacant since 2021.



Looking south towards Ashby intersection from in front of the historic Heinz Building.

There are other areas not defined as nodes that provide neighborhood serving commercial retail, such as the intersection at Bancroft Avenue and south of Delaware Street.



Storefronts on the southeast corner of Delaware Street.



Figure

14. Ground Floor Use based on Land Use Codes. Source: City of Berkeley, 2023. Alameda County Assessor, 2023.

State Legislation and Regional Policies

Several state laws and regional policies have been approved since the adoption of the City's General Plan in 2002. Many of these laws have made changes to the development review process, timeline, and requirements, as well as defined limitations on the City's discretion regarding project approval, conformance with certain development standards, and the applicability of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Berkeley Municipal Code continues to be updated to remain consistent with the laws and policies. The following provides an overview of relevant legislation and policy to the Specific Plan.

State Legislation

- **Senate Bill 375** (2009): This legislation requires California to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by setting reduction targets, preparing regional Sustainable Communities Strategies, and aligning land use, housing, and transportation planning processes. As a Priority Development Area, the Specific Plan Area is part of the Bay Region's Sustainable Communities Strategy, which could help qualify Specific Plan implementation projects for funding.
- **Housing Accountability Act (HAA)**: This legislation limits cities' ability to deny, reduce the density of, or make infeasible housing development projects or emergency shelters that are consistent with the City's objective local development standards and contribute to meeting housing need. The HAA was first enacted in 1982 and is continually amended to expand and strengthen its provisions. This effects how the Specific Plan's standards can be written and enforced.
- **Senate Bill 330** (2019): This legislation limits cities' ability to impose restrictions on housing developments. SB 330 seeks to expedite the housing approval process, enhance housing supply, and ensure predictability for developers by reducing regulatory uncertainty and potential obstacles to new housing construction. This also effects how standards can be written and enforced.
- **Senate Bill 35** (2017): SB 35 streamlines the housing approval process for qualifying multifamily residential projects with certain minimum affordable housing. This allows such projects to move more quickly through the City's review process and restricts the City's ability to reject these proposals to encourage the development of affordable housing. See more at the [Housing and Community Development SB 35 Guidelines](#).
- **Assembly Bill 1397** (2017): AB1397 requires that sites identified under the 5th RHNA cycle for development that were unused be incorporated into the 6th cycle, with by-right approval for developments that include at least 20% affordable units for lower incomes.
- **Density Bonus** (Gov Code 65915): State density bonus provisions have changed frequently and significantly in recent years to further incentivize certain types of housing, including but not limited to various levels of affordability, senior, transitional, veterans, and student. In exchange for a commitment to build the specified housing type or meet a specified level of affordability, the City must allow a density bonus — an increase over the maximum allowable residential density. In addition to increasing density under density bonus law, developers can use "waivers" and "concessions" to reduce, modify, or waive development standards. The City cannot deny a requested concession or incentive unless they can make a written finding, based upon substantial evidence, that the requested incentive or concessions: 1) does not result in identifiable and actual cost reductions, 2) would have a specific adverse impact on public health, safety or on property which is listed on the state Register of Historical Resources and there is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate the specific adverse impact without making the project unaffordable to the affordable households; or 3) would be contrary to state or federal law. The use of concessions can limit the applicability of development standards and other requirements for projects that qualify for a density bonus.
- **Assembly Bill 2011** (2022): AB 2011 allows for by-right approval of one-hundred percent affordable and mixed-income housing projects in zones where office, retail, or parking are the principally permitted use. This allows for the development of housing along commercial corridors when projects meet specific development standards, with one-hundred percent affordable projects facing the fewest requirements.

- **Senate Bill 6 (2022):** SB 6 passed alongside AB 2011 and also allows for the development of housing where office, retail, or parking are the principally permitted use. SB 6 does not contain any explicit affordability requirements, nor does it allow for by-right approval. Should project applicants choose to adhere to the affordability requirements of SB 35, they may receive a streamlined approval process.
- **Assembly Bill 2097 (2022):** This legislation prohibits parking requirements on most residential, commercial, and industrial development projects located within one-half mile of a major transit stop, unless the local agency makes certain findings. Stops along San Pablo Avenue have AC Transit bus service that qualifies them as major transit stops. Findings that could necessitate minimum parking requirements include: the project advances the City towards meeting its lower-income Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), it fulfills specific housing needs, such as housing for people with disabilities, or it is within one-half mile of existing residential or commercial parking.
- **Assembly Bill 101 (2019):** AB 101 requires that Low Barrier Navigation Centers (LBNC) receive by-right approval in areas zoned for mixed-use and nonresidential zones permitting multi-family uses. LBNCs are housing first, low barrier, service-oriented shelters that aim to help people experiencing homelessness find permanent housing.
- **Assembly Bill 2162 (2018):** This legislation requires that supportive housing be considered an allowed use by-right in zones where multi-family and mixed-uses are permitted, provided that the proposed project meets specified criteria.

Regional Policies

- **Plan Bay Area and Priority Development Areas:** Plan Bay Area 2050 is a long-range regional plan developed by MTC and Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) that integrates strategies to improve housing, the economy, transportation, and the environment with a focus on the region as a whole. The plan utilizes a combination of regulatory measures, funding mechanisms, community engagement, and ongoing assessment to implement these strategies. Priority Development Areas (PDAs) are designated areas that align transit access with opportunities of increased density of development. The majority of the San Pablo Specific Plan Area is a PDA.
- **Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Policy:** In 2022, MTC adopted a regional TOC Policy. The potential application of the TOC Policy to the San Pablo Specific Plan is discussed in the Resilience and Climate Adaptation section of the document below.

Existing Policy Capacity Assessment

As of 2020, there were 2,588 existing housing units in the Specific Plan Area. The majority of existing housing units, 2,018 homes, are in multi-family housing with 5 or more units. See **Figure 15**.

The Housing Element sites inventory analysis identifies 75 sites for potential housing development within the Specific Plan Area (representing 20% of all the sites identified citywide). Based on existing land use and zoning regulation, the Housing Element demonstrates capacity for approximately 3,700 units on the 75 sites (representing 28% of the total capacity of the Housing Element sites inventory citywide). See **Figure 16** and **Appendix B**.

The Housing Element Update sites inventory identifies sites under three categories: likely sites, pipeline sites, and opportunities sites. Likely sites and pipeline sites include housing projects that have either already been approved or are actively engaging with the City in anticipation of submitting an application for review. The Housing

Plan Area Existing Housing Units

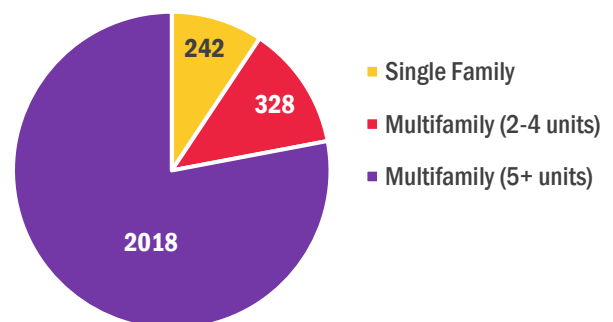


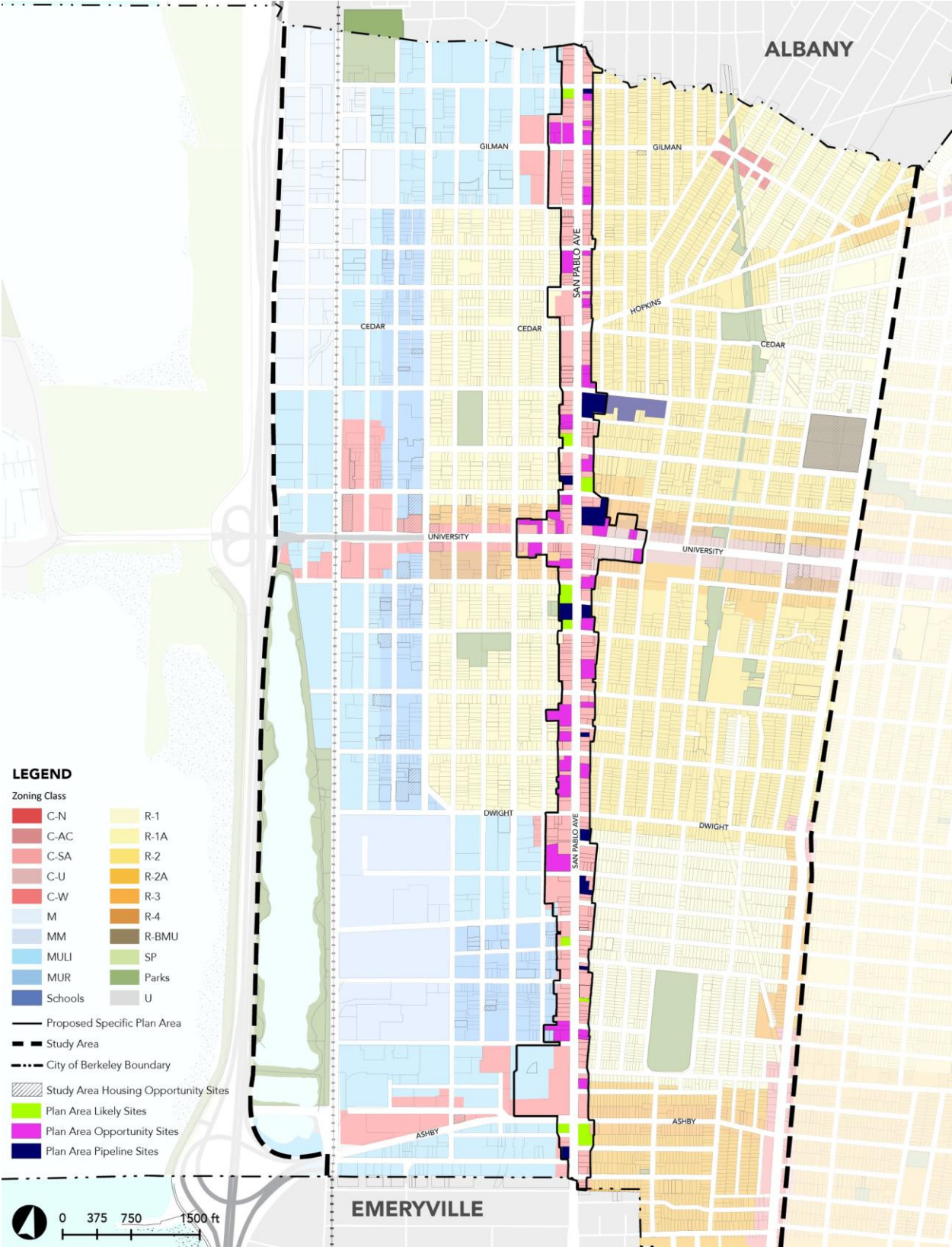
Figure 15. Distribution of Existing Housing Units in the Plan Area by Type. Source: City of Berkeley, 2023.

Element Update identifies 51 opportunity sites, 9 likely sites, and 15 pipeline sites within the Plan Area. Opportunity sites are vacant or underutilized sites with near-term potential for residential or mixed-use development. A range of land uses exist on opportunity sites. See **Table 3**. The majority of opportunity sites within the Plan Area are commercial uses at 35%, followed by vacant or parking lots at 27%.

Table 3: Existing Use of Specific Plan Area Housing Element Opportunity Sites

Existing Use	# of SPA Boundary Opportunity Sites	% of SPA Boundary Opportunity Sites
Auto-related uses (auto-body shops, car washes, smog shops, one gas station)	8	16%
Commercial uses (incl. storage facilities and one laundromat)	18	35%
Retail/restaurant uses	9	18%
Vacant/parking lot	14	27%
Single-family/parking lot	1	0.02 %
Public Lands	1	0.02%

Source: Street Level Advisors and Gordon Consulting, 2023.



Figure

16. Plan Area Housing Element Update Housing Sites Inventory. Source: City of Berkeley. "Housing Element Update 2023-2031", 02.17.26

The Housing Element sites inventory shows **capacity** for an additional 3,700 units within the Specific Plan Area, based on existing zoning regulations. However, **actual** housing production relies on a number of factors including the housing development community (both private and non-profit) market conditions, construction costs, the decisions of individual property owners, and other factors that are not controlled by the City. In addition, and as outlined above, developers may use Density Bonus state law, which would allow for additional units. However, higher construction costs and increases in financing costs could reduce the anticipated housing production.

Affordable Housing Policies and Potential Production

Recent and Current Production

Citywide income restricted affordable units made up approximately 12.6% of housing units completed between 2015 and 2022.³²

Potential Production

- As of 2022, there were 11 housing development projects that had been entitled along San Pablo Avenue but not yet issued Certificates of Occupancy. These buildings will provide 589 housing units, including an estimated 111 restricted affordable units (19.7%). An additional 2,029 units are under plan review.³³
- The City's Housing Element identifies an additional 51 opportunity sites in the Study Area that could accommodate 2,023 housing units. If these projects use state density bonus at the rate that has been typical of recent projects in Berkeley, the City may see development of over 2,700 housing units.
- The approved and anticipated sites along San Pablo Avenue could accommodate approximately 5,349 housing units including 824 deed-restricted affordable units (15.4% of the total). See **Table 4**.
- If a regional housing bond is approved in November 2024, a higher share of Study Area sites are likely to be developed as 100% affordable housing projects.
- In addition to onsite affordable units, this level of development could generate roughly \$20 million in in lieu fees which is sufficient to fund about one-third of the local subsidy needed to support the projected number of 100% affordable buildings in the Specific Plan Area.

Table 4: Potential Housing Production

	Total Units	100% Affordable	Onsite Affordable	% Affordable
Approved	589	63	52	19.7%
Permit Applications, etc	2,029	110	192	14.9%
Housing Element Opportunity Sites (including potential density bonus units)	2,731	148	258	14.9%
Total All Sites	5,349	321	503	15.4%

Source: City of Berkeley, Annual Progress Reports 2018-2022 and 6th Cycle Housing Element, Street Level Advisors calculations.

Berkeley Affordable Housing Preference Policy – In July 2023, Berkeley adopted a policy to provide a preference for current residents and descendants of residents of the city's historically redlined areas. Households with ties to redlined areas receive priority in leasing new City funded or regulated affordable units.

³² CA Department of Housing and Community Development, 5th Cycle RHNA Progress Report.

³³ City of Berkeley Annual Progress Reports to the California Department of Housing and Community Development 2018-2022.

Commercial Displacement Risk

Existing Commercial Conditions

Local and Regional Commercial Tensions – Berkeley’s Office of Economic Development’s (OED’s) 2016 Economic Development Work Session identified two primary commercial tensions on San Pablo Avenue.

- Local and regional interests for transportation and land use compete for space.
- Demand for housing development in the area threatens the existing concentration of auto businesses along San Pablo Avenue.

Local interests for the corridor emphasize better walkability, multi-modal transportation options, a broad range of businesses, and housing infill development. Regional interests support car access, street parking, and clusters of specialized businesses not widely available in other parts of Berkeley. This assessment suggests that those tensions continue in the Specific Plan Area.

Pandemic and Broader Economic Impacts – Nationally, small businesses closed at unprecedented rates from February to April of 2020. African-American, Latinx, Asian, immigrant, and women business owners were disproportionately affected, with African-American businesses owners most impacted.³⁴ Since then, many small businesses have re-opened or opened for the first time. During 2023, business owners cite inflation, supply chain effects, and filling open jobs as among their primary concerns.³⁵ Given this context, locally owned businesses on San Pablo Avenue are likely facing a baseline of vulnerability to displacement and/or closure given the pandemic, supply chain shifts, and inflation; businesses owned by people of color, immigrants, and women are likely feeling these pressures more acutely.³⁶

Vacancy Rates – According to OED data, San Pablo Avenue’s ground floor commercial vacancy rate (by square footage) doubled from 5.5% in 2017 to 10.8% in 2022. This rate increased most significantly, by three percentage points, from 2020 to 2021 and then again from 2021 to 2022, likely due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This vacancy rate was notably higher than other commercial corridors such as Solano (3.7%), Elmwood (7.7%), and North Shattuck (4.4%), but similar to University (12.8%), Downtown (11.9%) and South Berkeley (11.8%) neighborhoods. By November 2024, the citywide ground floor commercial vacancy rate decreased from previous years, specifically San Pablo Avenue’s vacancy rate dropped to 7.1%, which was lower compared to Downtown Berkeley (10.8%) and Telegraph Avenue (9.9%)³⁷



Figure 17. High-profile commercial closures include, from left to right, Ohmega Salvage and Albatross Pub.

³⁴ Fairlie, Robert. “The Impact of Covid-19 on Small Business Owners: Evidence of Early-Stage Losses from the April 2020 Current Population Survey.” 05, 2020.

³⁵ National Federation of Independent Business. Small Business Optimism Index, October 2023.

³⁶ Fairlie, Robert. “[The Impact of Covid-19 on Small Business Owners: Evidence of Early-Stage Losses from the April 2020 Current Population Survey](#).” 05, 2020.

³⁷ City of Berkeley. [Berkeley Economic Dashboards Update](#). Special Meeting – City Council Work session, Feb 26, 2025, page 3. Accessed August 29, 2025

Locally Owned, Brick and Mortar Businesses and Associated Displacement Risks

The inventory of businesses on San Pablo Avenue was constructed based on the City of Berkeley's Business License database and a site visit conducted on August 3, 2023, along San Pablo Avenue. Because the scope of this analysis is limited to displacement risk and is not a broad market analysis, the inventory focuses on the narrower universe of businesses that are more likely to face consequential displacement pressures: locally owned businesses with brick-and-mortar storefronts on the corridor. These businesses were then classified according to type (see **Figure 20** for a map of these ground floor businesses) and according to displacement risk (dependence on car access and street parking; key business-owner demographics; historic and cultural significance; and accessibility to lower-income residents). A summary of key findings is below.

Locally Owned³⁸, Brick and Mortar Business Characteristics: Because the City does not collect demographic data about local business owners, this inventory used business-owner information from the active business license dataset, business websites, news articles, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Yelp to make exploratory conclusions about business-owner demographics; this assessment did not include a survey that asked business owners to share their demographic characteristics. Preliminary findings include:

- 90% of brick and mortar businesses on the corridor are likely locally owned businesses;
- 21% of those businesses are likely owned by women;
- 41% are likely owned by people of color; and,
- 28% likely hold some form of historic or cultural significance.

Given that a significant number of businesses on the corridor are likely owned by women and/or people of color and they may be facing baseline pressures coming out of the pandemic and due to inflation and additional structural barriers to capital, contracts, and market access, there is an opportunity during the Specific Plan process to direct additional time and attention to these businesses to understand how to best support their success and longevity on the corridor.

Commercial Parking Needs – Businesses along the street rely on customers being able to access the corridor via car and street parking. Several local businesses, such as Tokyo Fish Market, Emerald City Gowns, East Bay Nursery, and Cafe Leila, have small parking lots specific to those businesses, but most do not. Prior City assessments have identified auto and home improvement businesses as particularly dependent on street parking. Based on active business license data, auto businesses comprise 20% of brick and mortars and home improvement businesses make up 12% of brick and mortars. This assessment also estimates that businesses that A) are specialized and may need to attract customers from a broader geographic radius or that B) may be particularly difficult to shift to a customer base that relies on walking, biking and/or public transit (e.g., a customer base of families with children) are especially dependent on car access and street parking. All told, this category of businesses that are likely to be especially reliant on car access and street parking includes 35% of locally owned, brick and mortar businesses on the corridor.

³⁸ Whether businesses were locally owned was determined primarily according to owner information in the City's business license database and business websites and social media platforms. Local ownership means that the owner is based anywhere in the nine-county Bay Area.



Figure 18. Examples of businesses with small off-street parking lots, from left to right, Tokyo Fish Market and East Bay Nursery.

Auto Businesses – Auto businesses are prevalent and dispersed across the corridor. Many of these businesses opened in the 1970s and 1980s, although one appears to go back as far as 1946. There is an opportunity for the Specific Plan to evaluate the desire and needed policies for auto businesses to remain on the San Pablo corridor, particularly as auto technology continues to evolve.

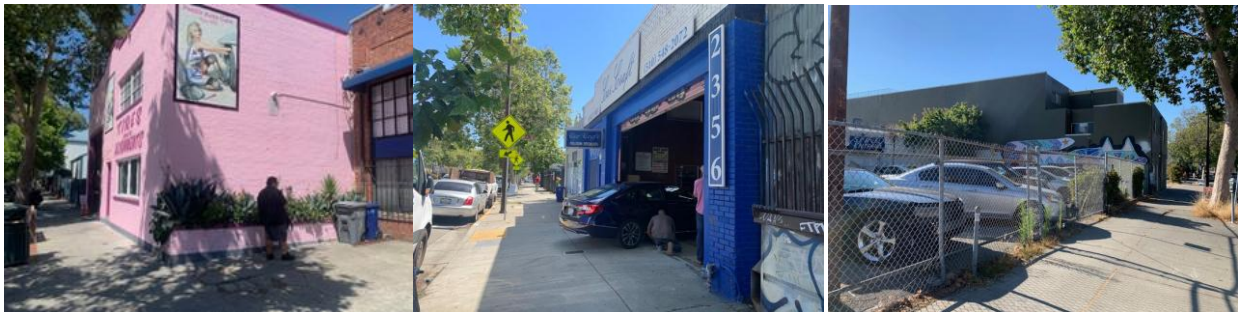


Figure 19. Example auto businesses include, from left to right, Patti's Auto Care, Car Craft Collision Specialists, and Used Car Sales.

Businesses potentially accessible to low-income residents – This inventory anecdotally identified businesses that meet the criterion of offering a lower relative price point for their goods or services and finds that approximately 10% of locally owned brick and mortar businesses may be particularly accessible to low-income residents in the area. These businesses were identified because they a) are a type of business that typically markets to lower-income residents (e.g., laundromat, corner store, to-go restaurant); b) they were described in online reviews as offering lower prices than their competitors; or c) they offer lower prices than similar businesses on the corridor (e.g., a vegetarian egg breakfast costs \$10.95 vs. \$19). The businesses identified include retail stores, a laundromat, restaurants, grocery stores, beauty salons, and several corner stores. As more market-rate housing is built on San Pablo Avenue, these businesses may face increased displacement pressures if the overall population becomes higher-income and rents and property taxes increase.

Potential Future Changes to Supply of Commercial Space

Current zoning does not require ground floor commercial space outside of commercial nodes. But the zoning code does allow extra height for mixed-use buildings along the corridor, and this appears to be encouraging developers to propose mixed-use projects along the corridor, with a few exceptions. The zoning code requires and encourages ground floor commercial space at the intersection of major transit corridors within commercial nodes. Discussions with developers, leasing agents, and real estate professionals indicate that a combination of rental costs, general retail and business conditions, and physical design of spaces (e.g., configuration and size of spaces, service and utility design) constrain the ability to lease these new commercial spaces.

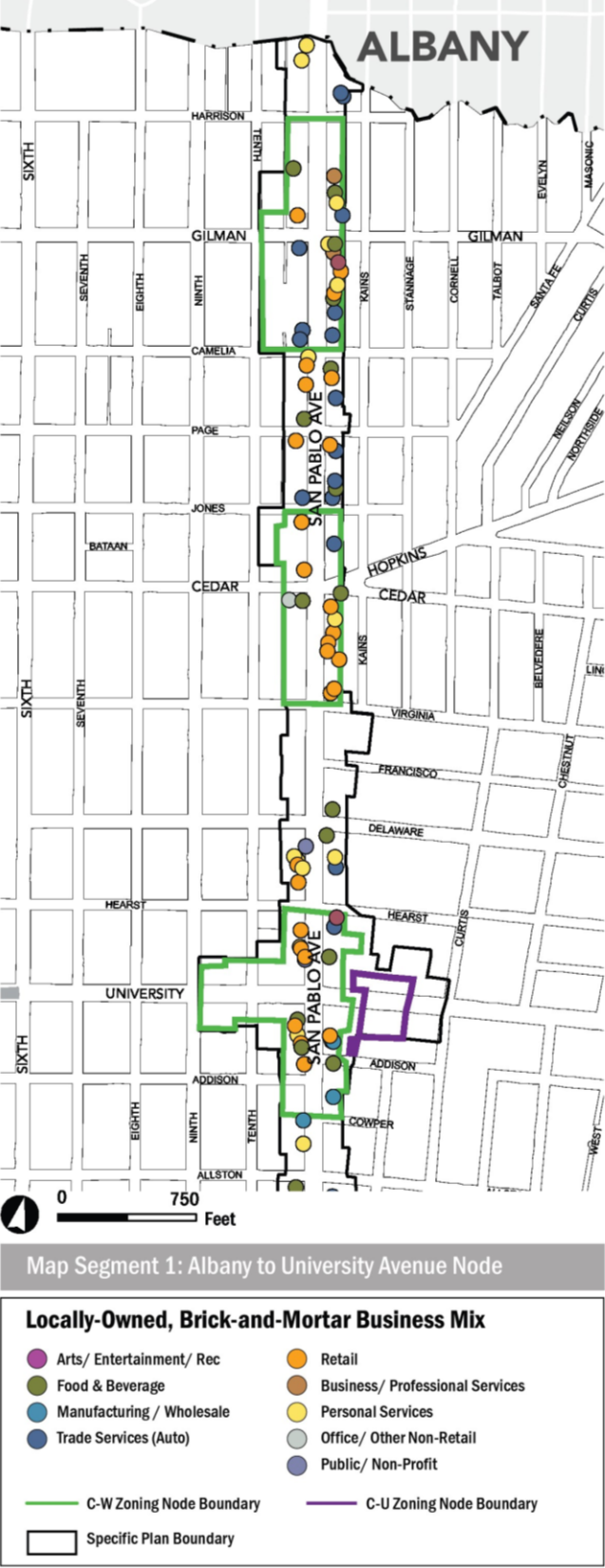
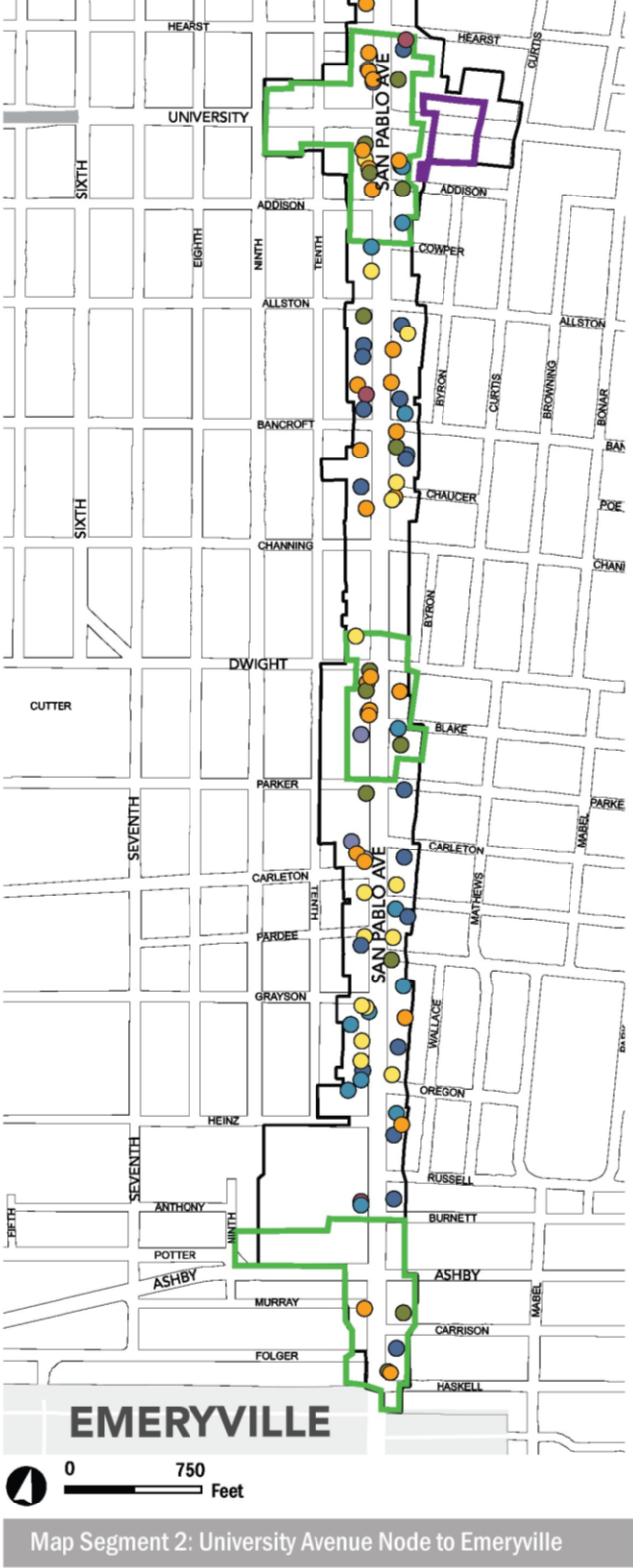


Figure 20. Mix of ground floor locally owned, brick and mortar businesses. Source: Street Level Advisors and Gordon Consulting, 2023.

Public Realm Assessment

The public realm along San Pablo Avenue is defined by the qualities of streetscape - the sidewalk area within the public right of way and the improvements and activities that take place there. The context along the street affects the quality and experience of the public realm. The context includes the buildings, parking lots, and other frontages next to the street and the activities that occur there. Also, the conditions and quality of the roadway, median, and parking/loading lanes of San Pablo Avenue have an impact on the quality and experience of the public realm.

The public realm along San Pablo Avenue varies in quality and character. See **Figure 21**. The Specific Plan process will explore options for common elements throughout the corridor, such as trees, and the potential for segment or district improvements. Places could have distinct decorative features like pedestrian lighting, artwork, and planting to create an inviting atmosphere. Currently, some uses and buildings provide distinct features that enhance the public realm, such as restaurants, cafes, and small businesses. These create a more engaging and active public realm.

Stretches with poor sidewalk conditions and landscaping that is not maintained, paired with vandalized or vacant building frontages or high fencing, contrast with the areas of activity. Those locations have less foot traffic and fewer parked cars.



Figure 21. The public realm along San Pablo Avenue varies in quality and character.

Streetscape Conditions

Landscape

The street trees along the sidewalks and landscaped medians are an asset for San Pablo Avenue's public realm. See **Figure 22**. However, there are gaps in the tree canopy and maintenance issues with trees and tree wells along the sidewalks.



Figure 22 Mature London Plane trees define the character of San Pablo Avenue.

In addition, there is limited landscaping along most of the sidewalks. See **Figure 23**. Some other major streets in Berkeley have business improvement districts that manage installation and maintenance of landscape, but San Pablo Avenue does not have any improvement districts.



Figure 23. The condition of tree wells varies throughout the corridor.

Lighting

Existing lighting along the street primarily illuminates the roadway and intersections. Nighttime sidewalk lighting levels tend to be low between intersections, unless storefront uses, buildings, or pedestrian lights at bus stops illuminate the sidewalk. See **Figure 24**. The 2004 Improvement Plan identified this issue and set new lighting standards. While there has been some implementation of the standards in front of new development, there have not been recent publicly funded pedestrian lighting improvements along San Pablo Avenue. The Alameda CTC Safety Enhancement Project will upgrade lighting at some improved bus stops and pedestrian crossings.



Figure 24. Existing roadway and pedestrian lighting.

Street Furnishings

Street furnishings such as benches and trash receptacles are almost exclusively at bus stops. There are some businesses that provide outdoor “café” seating for their patrons. See **Figure 25**.

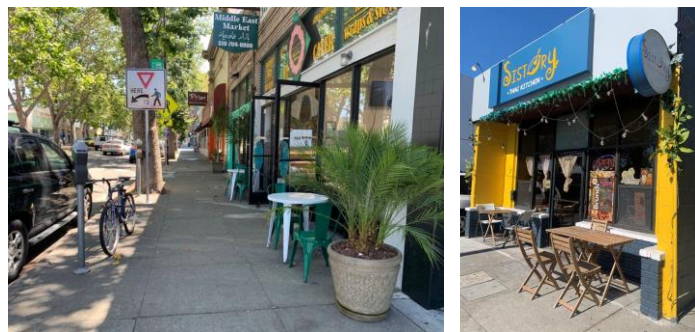


Figure 25. Existing private outdoor “café” seating.

Sidewalk

Sidewalk conditions are variable. There are locations where adjacent parcels are vacant, underutilized, or for other reasons trash, leaf, and debris clutter the sidewalk. There are also places where the sidewalk needs repair. Typically, when development occurs adjacent sidewalks are reconstructed by the developer. See **Figures 26, 27, and 28**. There are several locations along the street where the sidewalks are new and are in good condition. The two Alameda CTC

projects will be making some sidewalk improvements, including widened sidewalks with bus bulbs into the parking lane at bus stops served by AC Transit Rapid service, see further discussion in the Mobility section.



Figure 26. Existing 13 ft. wide sidewalk.



Figure 27. Many existing sidewalks are in poor condition.



Figure 28. Some buildings provide additional sidewalk space.

Building and Site Frontages

There is a wide variety of frontage conditions along San Pablo Avenue today from tall fences or blank facades to active “storefront” restaurants and sidewalk tables.

There are older buildings that are vacant, several of which appear to not be actively on the market to be leased. Some, but not all, older buildings along the street have articulation, building form, and materials that are visually engaging and include murals. **Figure 29.**



Figure 29. Painted storefronts with murals provide visual interest when the building does not allow for windows and can represent the culture and values of the local community.

Some new developments 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, such as the landscape planters at The Jones north of Cedar Street. **Figure 30.** Others like Aquatic at Ashby have a small seating area and a bench and rain shelter built into the additional sidewalk level space. **Figure 31.**



Figure 30. Ground floor setback and planters at The Jones.



Figure 31. Semi-public space with seating and bus stop integrated in the Aquatic at Ashby frontage.

Parking Lots and Gas Stations

There are locations with larger parking lots or other auto circulation, such as the Solar Car Wash, the REI shopping center parking lot, and the McDonald's, which cater to vehicular movement, as opposed to pedestrians. The sidewalk frontages of these sites are typically not supportive of pedestrian activity along the street.

Activity and use of underused spaces. In some locations food trucks and trailers utilize former and current gas station locations as semi-permanent locations, which include makeshift outdoor seating. **Figure 32.** These illustrate the potential for active use of underutilized parking lots even if the parking is more heavily used on particular days or seasons.



Figure 32. Food trucks and trailers use underutilized parking and sites.

Safety

Conditions along the street can create an environment that feels unsafe. Assessment of crime data from the Berkeley Police Department from August 2022 to August 2023 shows a total of 578 incidents in the Specific Plan Area, which makes up 5 percent of the overall crime incidents in Berkeley during that time. Improved lighting at night, improvements to the general condition of the public realm, and development that supports activity along the street can change the impression that San Pablo Avenue is a particularly unsafe place.

Community Life along San Pablo Avenue

Community life describes the condition of people being in a public space and feeling part of and having the opportunity to interact with other community members who use the space. The physical constraints of the street and development patterns along San Pablo Avenue restrict public space to the typical 13-foot-wide sidewalks along the street.

Designated Nodes and Clusters of Activity

San Pablo Avenue features clusters of retail and other uses adjacent to five major intersections—Gilman Street, Cedar Street, University Avenue, Dwight Way, and Ashby Avenue—these are nodes of activity, each presenting a distinct mix of businesses and urban form that supports that activity. See **Figure 34** (Method of assessment, see **Table 5**). The 1993 West Berkeley Plan identified these locations as Commercial Nodes, and other public policies and regulations have been shaped to reinforce these nodes. The current zoning ordinance also provides some special standards, as discussed in the Land Use Planning policies section above. These have been successful to a greater or lesser extent in each node, and the extent of success has been affected by economic realities and property owner decisions.

Semi-Public Spaces

While there are no public parks along San Pablo Avenue, there are small enclaves of semi-public space, often as private outdoor spaces associated with restaurants and cafés. Also, some parking lots or other paved areas are used by adjacent businesses. Some new developments have included public benches or other elements in ground floor setbacks that are also semi-public.

Table 5: Methodology of assessing frontage activity along San Pablo.

	Sidewalk	Building Frontage	Other
Frontages that activate the sidewalk	Maintained and landscaped if any	Well maintained brick-and-mortar with pedestrian engaging features, such as storefront windows, murals, etc.	
Inactive Frontages that support some aspects of a comfortable walking environment	Maintained and landscaped if any	Landscape buffered setback, murals with minimal or no visible activity.	Maintained, landscaped buffered parking lots, or yards of auto-oriented uses.
Inactive Frontages	Poorly maintained and landscaped if any	Poor maintained, visibly damaged and/or looks unoccupied/ abandoned.	Parking lots and yards without landscape buffer. Fenced vacant land

Source: CD+A, 2023

Community Events and Social Engagement

There are existing organizations in the area that do provide community gathering venues, like Brasarte and Ashkenaz. Also, there are existing models for short term use of streets as public spaces – the SF Bay Brazilian Day & Lavagem festival, **Figure 33**, events during street closures in the Gilman District, and neighborhood street parties on blocks of streets that cross San Pablo Avenue.



Figure 33. 1901 San Pablo Avenue houses Brasarte and other Brazilian culturally oriented groups. The center and left photos show the 2023 Brazilian Day & Lavagem event on the block of Hearst St just east of San Pablo Avenue.

Study Area Community Spaces

The limited sidewalk or other public space within the San Pablo Avenue right of way make it make it difficult to create community gathering spaces within the Specific Plan Area. While opportunities may exist to create some smaller community spaces on side streets, residents and users of the Specific Plan Area are likely to rely on community space in the surrounding Study Area. The Specific Plan process can define ways to improve connections between the Specific Plan Area and surrounding parks, schools, and other community spaces can be improved.



Frontage Activity

- Frontages that Activate the Sidewalk and Support a Comfortable Walking Environment
- Inactive Frontages that Support Some Aspects of a Comfortable Walking Environment
- Inactive Frontages that do not Support a Comfortable Walking Environment

Commercial Nodes

- C-W Zoning Boundary
- University Ave Node Area
- Study Area
- Specific Plan Boundary



Figure 34. Observation of Frontage Activity along the corridor. Source: City of Berkeley. CD+A. 2023.

Resilience and Climate Adaptation Conditions and Plans

Existing Plans

Local-Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), 2019 – The LHMP serves to assess current hazards and vulnerabilities, outlines a five-year Mitigation Strategy to reduce vulnerabilities through various actions, and ensures eligibility for pre-disaster mitigation grants and post-disaster federal and state recovery funding by meeting Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requirements³⁹.

- **Risk of Liquefaction:** During a major earthquake event, much of the study area and westernmost parts of the city are at risk of liquefaction. Liquefaction can destroy pavements and dislodge foundations.
- **Potentially Seismically Vulnerable Buildings:** The LHMP discusses the Retrofit Grants Program and the updating of the city's inventory of Seismically Vulnerable Buildings in 2018. The update added 1,047 potentially vulnerable building that had not been previously identified. This increase was mainly due to the expansion of building construction types that were considered at risk. A number of the seismically vulnerable buildings are in the San Pablo Specific Plan Area, see **Figure 35**. This map reflects properties that are eligible for the Cal OES/FEMA Grant Program.
- **Floods:** Creek flooding in Berkeley has the potential to affect about 675 structures, mainly in the western, industrial area of the city. Storm drain overflow creates localized flooding in many intersections in Berkeley. FEMA flood risk maps illustrate the risks in the western industrial area. While this is within the Study Area, the flood risk maps indicate a very small area of flood risk potential on two properties in the Specific Plan area adjacent to Codornices Creek and the city of Albany. The LHMP also describes areas of the city that are at risk to localized flooding from storm drain overflow. San Pablo Avenue within the Potter Watershed between Ward and Murry Street has the potential to experience storm drain overflow.⁴⁰
- **Hazardous Materials Transportation:** San Pablo Avenue is one of the streets in Berkeley that is a hazardous materials transportation route. Collisions with trucks carrying dangerous materials have occurred and can be expected to occur in the future.
- **Climate Change:** Like regions across the globe, the San Francisco Bay Area is experiencing negative impacts of climate change. Berkeley's Climate Action Plan identifies the City's plan for emissions reductions, known as climate change mitigation.
- **Hazardous Material Release:** The City has identified 15 facilities in Berkeley with sufficiently large quantities of toxic chemicals to pose a high risk to the community. Eleven of those 15 facilities are distributed in the most western parts of the Study Area, with 10 located south of University Avenue. Natural hazards identified in the plan could trigger the release of hazardous materials and put nearby residents at risk of exposure.

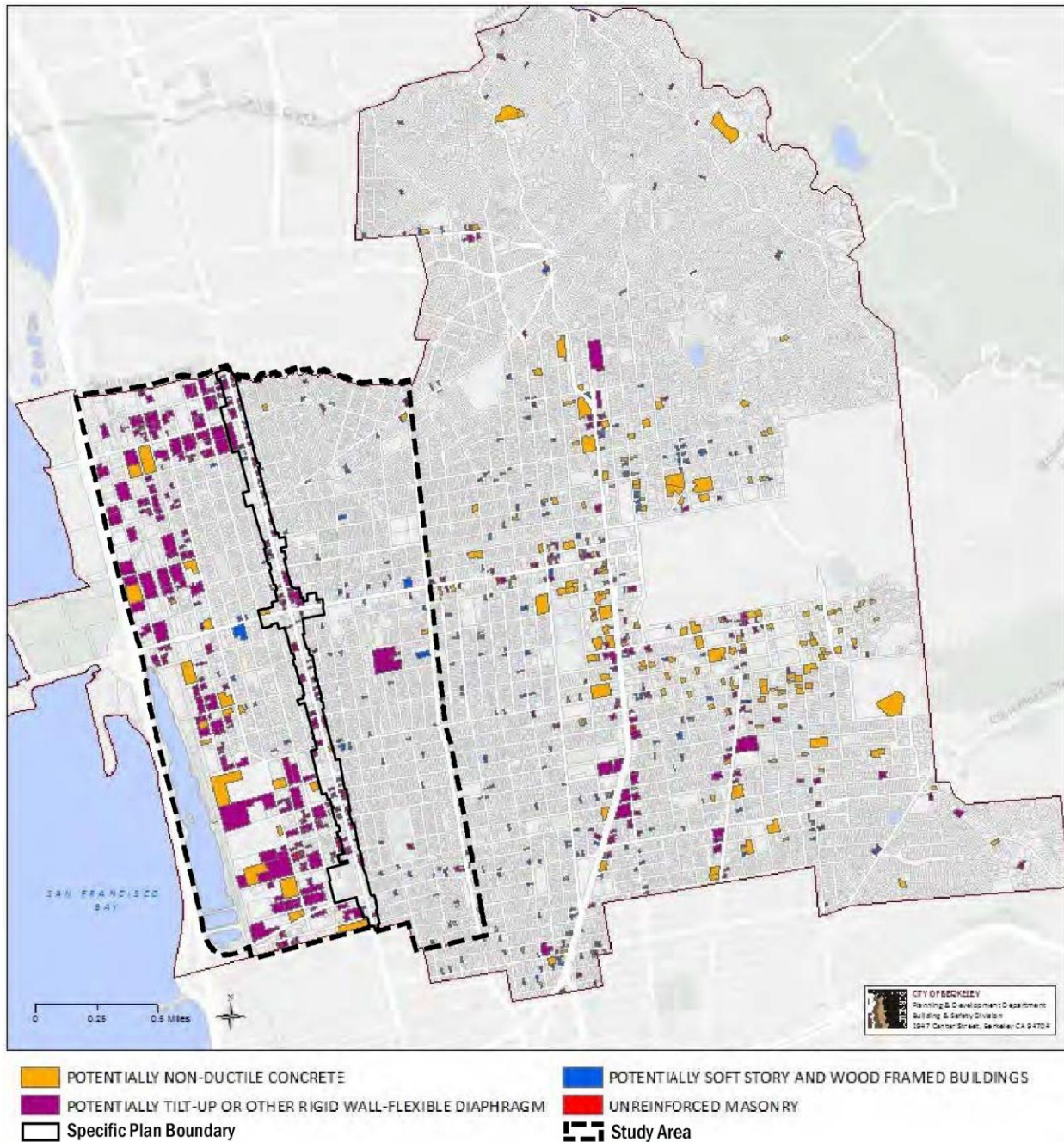
Climate Action Plan (CAP) – The plan, adopted in 2009, represents key strategies for achieving a sustainable future in Berkeley. Within transit corridors such as the San Pablo Avenue corridor, the City's CAP advocates for smart growth and increased 'walkability', 'bikeability', and public transit ridership.

- General Plan Open Space and Recreation:
 - As part of the City of Berkeley's General Plan, the City adopted the Open Space and Recreation Element in 2002. The Open Space and Recreation Element applies the following policies to the various parks and other natural areas in the Study Area, which include Strawberry Creek Park, George Florence Park, and San Pablo Park.

³⁹ See Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) [Regulations and Guidance](#) for further information.

⁴⁰ City of Berkeley. "2019 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan", 12.10.2019, p.9. <https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/2022-01/Local-Hazard-Mitigation-Plan-2019.pdf>

- Policy OS-4 Working with Other Agencies: Work with the Berkeley Unified School District, the University of California, the East Bay Municipal Utility District, and the East Bay Regional Park District to improve, preserve, maintain, and renovate their open space and recreation facilities.



Figure

35. Updated Inventory of Seismically Vulnerable Buildings (2018). Source: 2019 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

- Policy OS-7 Serving Disadvantaged Populations: Within the context of open space resource allocations for new or expanded facilities, give high priority to providing additional facilities for populations that are disadvantaged or underserved.
- Policy OS-10 Access Improvements: Improve transit, bicycle, disabled, and pedestrian access to and between open space and recreation facilities.

Urban Tree Canopy – Berkeley’s tree canopy encompasses approximately 38,000 trees. The Climate Action Plan recognizes an inequitable distribution of urban tree canopy in Berkeley, with fewer trees located in the West and South Berkeley neighborhoods, which includes the Study Area. This disparity in the tree canopy is graphically represented in **Figure 36**. The 2023 Climate Action Plan Update report recognizes this existing condition and states that the city will plant 1,000 new street trees along streets in West and South Berkeley neighborhoods over the next two years.

In contrast to the overall distribution throughout the city, San Pablo Avenue displays a relatively even distribution and dense tree coverage when compared to other corridors like University Avenue. This is due to three rows of trees (along both sidewalks and in the median of San Pablo Avenue) that are relatively consistent throughout the corridor. This is the result of efforts over the past 10 or so years to fill in gaps in the tree canopy along San Pablo Avenue.

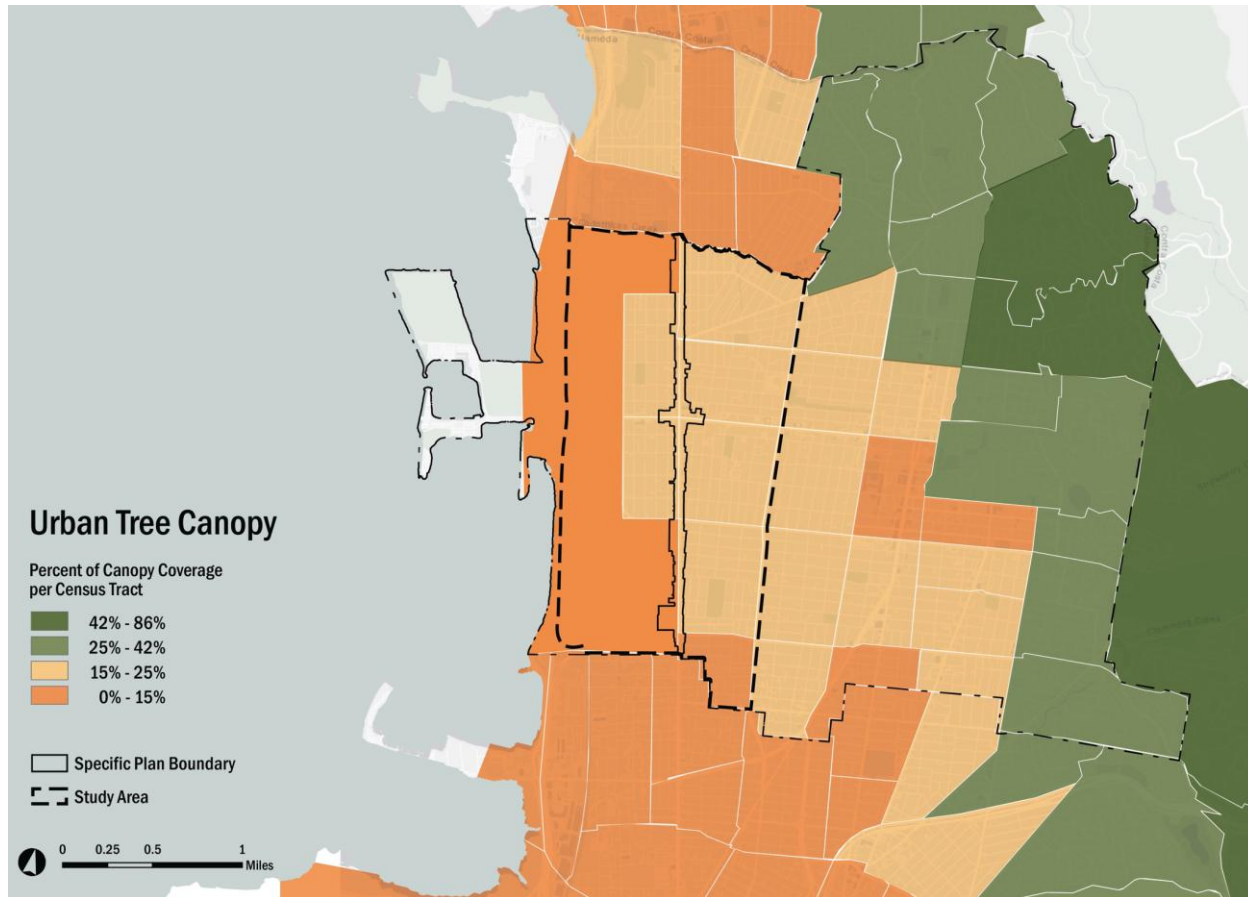


Figure 36. Urban Tree Canopy - percent coverage per Census Tract. Source: EarthDefine, USDA Forest Service, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, 2018.

Potential Future Opportunities

Transit-Oriented Community (TOC) Designation – In 2022, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) adopted a TOC Policy to boost the overall housing supply and increase residential densities in transit-rich areas of the Bay Area; spur commercial development near transit hubs; promote bus transit, walking, biking and shared mobility; and foster partnerships to create transit-oriented communities where people of all income levels, racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages and ability levels can live, work and thrive. Future MTC One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) funding cycles will consider funding revisions to prioritize investments in TOCs.

Although not currently designated, the San Pablo Specific Plan Area is a potential future TOC given its mix of land uses including housing, jobs, services, and shopping with close proximity to transit. While only a small portion of the

Specific Plan area is within proximity to the types of existing transit that meet the requirements for TOC designation, see **Figure 37**, the City could choose to “opt in” the area as a TOC. The intersection of University and San Pablo Avenues is within ½ mile of the Berkeley Capitol Corridor Station (Tier 4 TOC designation). Should AC Transit implement bus rapid transit (BRT) service on San Pablo Avenue, the Specific Plan Area would qualify as a Tier 3 TOC. This designation could provide opportunities for the City to receive targeted funding for public improvements in the Specific Plan Area. To be eligible for OBAG 4 and other discretionary MTC funds that may be linked to TOC Policy compliance, the City would need to demonstrate compliance with TOC requirements prior to the adoption of OBAG 4 funding requirements which is expected to occur in 2026.⁴¹

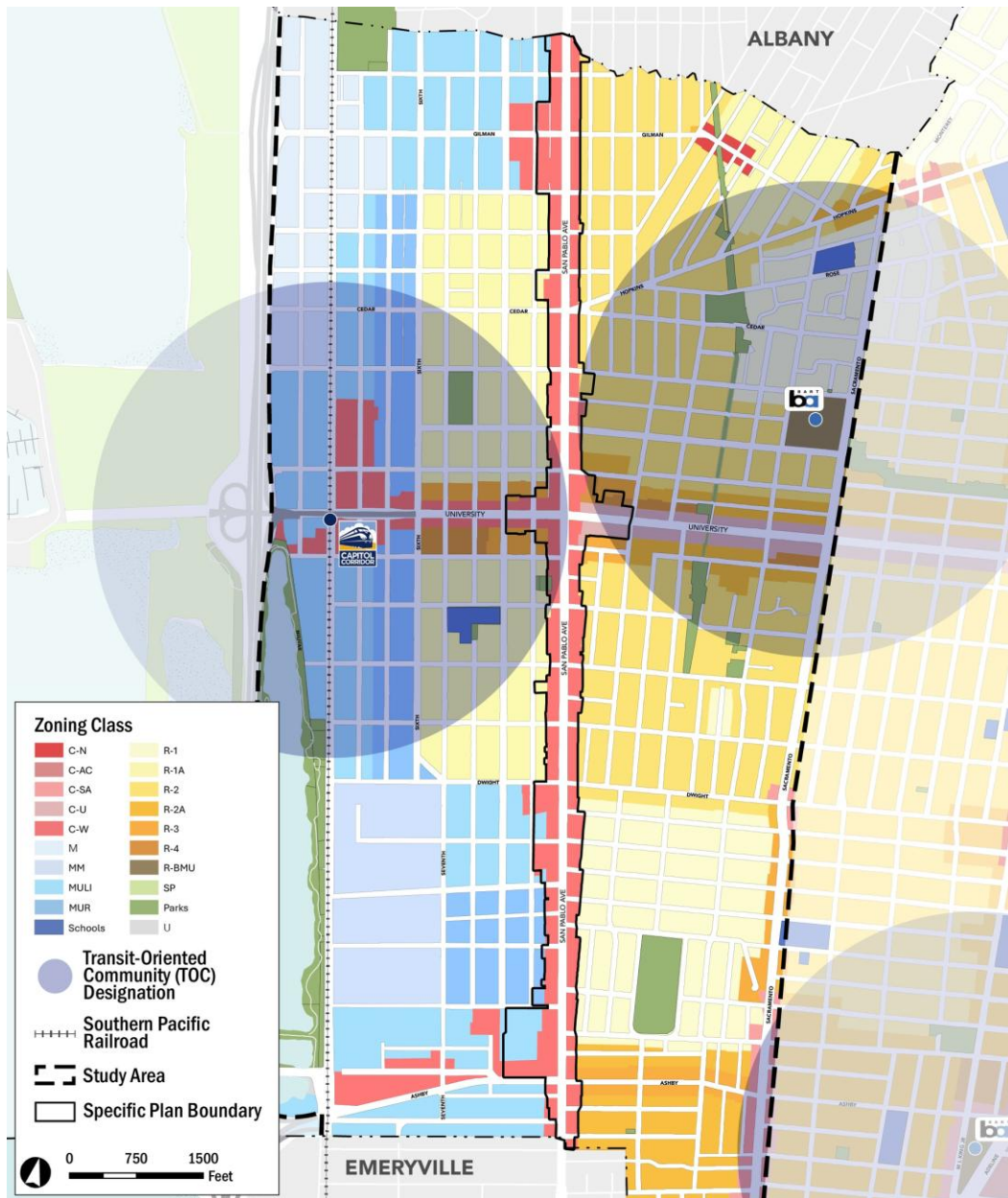


Figure 37. Transit Oriented Community (TOC) Designation. Source: City of Berkeley, MTC, 2023.

⁴¹ More information about MTC's TOC policy can be found at <https://mtc.ca.gov/planning/land-use/transit-oriented-communities-toc-policy>.

Appendix A.1

Table 1: Residential District Development Standards

Zoning District	Min Lot Area (sq. ft.)	Density (sq. ft.) Min Lot Area Per Unit	Height Limit			Yard ³						Maximum Lot Coverage			Usable Open Space Per Unit (sq. ft.)	Density Assumption for Housing Element Update (du/acre) ⁷
			Avg. Height	Max. Height (height overlay)	Stories (#)	Story	Front	Rear	Side	Street Side	Building Separati on	Main Building Height (stories)	Interior and Through Lots (%)	Corner Lots (%)		
R-1 Single Family	5,000	—	28' ¹	35'	3	All	20'	20'	4'	4'	—	1 to 3	40	40	400	6
R-1A Limited Two Family	5,000	—	28' ¹	35'	3	1	20'	20'	4'	4'	8' ⁶	1	40	45	400	15
						2	20'	20'	4'	4'	12' ⁶	2	40	45		
						3	20'	20'	4'	4'	16' ⁶	3	40	45		
R-2 Restricted Two Family	5,000	2,500	28' ¹	35' ²	3	1	20'	20'	4'	10'	8'	1	45	50	400	20
						2	20'	20'	4'	10'	12'	2	40	45		
						3	20'	20'	6'	10'	16'	3	35	40		
R-2A Restricted Multiple Family	5,000	1,650	28' ¹	35' ²	3	1	15'	15'	4'	6'	8'	1	45	50	300	25
						2	15'	15'	4'	8'	12'	2	40	45		
						3	15'	15'	6'	10'	16'	3	35	40		
R-3 Multiple Family	5,000	— ³	35'	35' ¹⁰	3	1	15'	15'	4'	6'	8'	1	45	50	200 ⁵	40
						2	15'	15'	4'	8'	12'	2	45	50		
						3	15'	15'	6'	10'	16'	3	30	45		
R-4 Multi Family	5,000	— ³	35' ⁸	35' ⁹	3 ⁴	1	15'	15'	4'	6'	8'	1	45	50	200 ⁵	75
						2	15'	15'	4'	8'	12'	2	45	50		
						3	15'	15'	6'	10'	16'	3	40	45		
						4	15'	17'	8'	12'	20'	4	35	40		
						5	15'	19'	10'	14'	24'	5	35	40		
						6	15'	21'	12'	15'	28'	6	35	40		

¹ Up to 35’ allowed with an AUP.

² May exceed with an AUP.

³ No minimum lot area per unit except for Group Living Accommodations (GLA). 1 GLA room for every 350 sq. ft; additional room allowed for any remaining lot area of more than 200 sq. ft.

⁴ Main Buildings may exceed 35 ft. and three stories in height, to a height of, but not exceeding, 65 ft. and six stories subject to obtaining a Use Permit.

⁵ 200 sq. ft. for each dwelling unit, 90 sq. ft. for each person in a Group Accommodation Room.

⁷ As noted on page C-17 of the housing element. These Average Densities are conservative estimates of the number of units that could be developed. Table C-7 in the HEU demonstrates the Average and Maximum Density.

⁸ Main Buildings may exceed 35 ft. and three stories in height, to a height of, but not exceeding, 65 ft. and six stories subject to obtaining a Use Permit.

⁹ Up to 35’ allowed with an AUP, 65’ and six stories allowed with Use Permit.

¹⁰ Residential Additions max. 16’ or 35’ with an AUP.

Table 2: Commercial and Mixed-Use and Residential Development Standards

Zoning District	Max. FAR (Non-Res/MU only)	Max. Height (Com-Res-Only/MU)	Max. Stories (Com-Res-only/MU)	Open Space (SF/unit) (MU/Res. only)	Max. Coverage (Com-Res-Only/MU)	Setbacks ³		Main Building Separation	Min. Lot Area (SF)	Density (DU/acre)	Density Assumption for Housing Element Update (du/acre) ⁷
C-U University Avenue	2.2-3.0/None	36-48' ¹ /36'	3-4 ¹	200	100%/40-50%	Res/Non-Res. Uses	Front/street (non-res. fronting on University Avenue): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avg 2'• 2' at all sidewalk pedestrian entries. Front/street (res. fronting on University Avenue): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avg 2'• Max 10' ⁵ Front/street (not fronting University Avenue and confronting a non-res. district): No minimum. Rear (south side of University Avenue; abutting res. district): Min 10' or 10% of lot depth, whichever is greater, and average of 20' ⁶ Rear (south side of University Avenue not abutting res. district): No minimum. Rear (north side of University Avenue): per section 23.204.060.D.5, must not cast a shadow at noon more than 20' onto any lot in a residential district as calculated when the sun is at a 29-degree angle above the horizon (winter solstice). Interior side: No Minimum Street side: 2' average	Res. only projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1st story: 8'• 2nd story: 12'• 3rd story: 16'	None/5,000 ²	None	150
						Res. Only Uses ⁸	Front⁹: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avg 2'• Max 10' Rear: 15' Interior: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1st story: 4'• 2nd story: 4'• 3rd story: 6' Street side: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1st story: 6'• 2nd story: 8'• 3rd story: 10'				
C-W West Berkeley	3.0	40-50'	3-4 ⁴	40	100%	None ³		None	None	150	

¹ 3rd floor and above residential only.

² Standards included are for residential or mixed use. Standards differ slightly for live/work project.

³ Lots abutting/confront a residential district: same as required front and street side setback in adjacent residential district, 5 ft interior side, and 10 ft or 10% of the lot depth, whichever is less, rear setback. See Section 23.304.030.C.2.

⁴ 50 ft. and 4 stories allowed for mixed-use projects. The 4th floor must be residential or live/work.

⁵ A maximum setback of 10 ft is only permitted for landscaping that enhances the streetscape and provides privacy for residential units on the first floor.

⁶ See 23.304.030(C)(2)(b) (Modifications in Commercial Districts) for allowed reductions.

⁷ As noted on page C-17 of the housing element. These Average Densities are conservative estimates of the number of units that could be developed. Table C-7 in the HEU demonstrates the Average and Maximum Density.

⁸ May be modified with a UP(PH).

⁹ Setback area must be used to accommodate landscaping that enhances the streetscape and provides a sense of privacy for residential units on the first floor.

Table 3: Manufacturing Districts Development Standards

Zoning District	Min Lot Area (sq. ft.)		Min. Lot Width	Height Limit		Lot Line Setbacks				Building Separation	Maximum Lot Coverage	FAR	Usable Open Space Per Unit (sq. ft.)		Density Assumption for Housing Element Updates (du/acre) ⁷
						Front	Rear	Side	Street Side						
M Manufacturing	20,000		N/a	45'		No Minimum	No Minimum	No Minimum	No Minimum	No Minimum	100%	2.0	N/A		N/A
MM Mixed Manufacturing	20,000		N/a	45'		No Minimum	No Minimum	No Minimum	No Minimum	No Minimum	100%	2.0	N/A		N/A
MU-LI Mixed Use-Light Industrial	No Minimum		N/a	45'		No Minimum	No Minimum	No Minimum	No Minimum	No Minimum	100%	2.0	N/A		N/A
MU-R Mixed Use-Residential District ⁸	New Lot	No Minimum	40'	Live/work	28' and 3 stories ³	5'	No Minimum ⁵	No Minimum	5'	No Minimum	100%	1.0/1.5 ⁶	Per Dwelling Unit	150	24.5
				Residential or mixed-use ²	35' and 3 stories										
	Per Dwelling Unit or Live/Work Unit	1,250 ¹		All other uses	35' and 2 stories ⁴										

¹ One additional dwelling unit allowed for remaining lot areas between 750 and 1,250 square feet.

² Mixed use is defined here as a building with 50 percent or more of gross floor area used for residential (including live/work) purposes.

³ Maximum 35 ft. with a Use Permit.

⁴ Maximum 3 stories for arts/craft studios and light manufacturing (with no other non-residential uses) on a block without dwelling units.

⁵ Minimum 5 ft. if rear of lot abuts a street.

⁶ Maximum 1.5 for buildings with 50 percent or more residential or live/work floor area.

⁷ As noted on page C-17 of the housing element. These Average Densities are conservative estimates of the number of units that could be developed. Table C-7 in the HEU demonstrates the Average and Maximum Density.

⁸ Standards included are for residential or mixed use. Standards differ slightly for live/work project.

Table 4: Ground Floor Uses along San Pablo Avenue

	Allowed Ground Floor Uses	Allowed Ground Floor Uses with Use Permit	Minimum Floor to Ceiling Height	Minimum Floor Area ²	Minimum Street Frontage ³	Minimum Area for Retail Sales, Personal and Household Services, or Food Service ⁴	Maximum Area for Office Use ⁴
C-W	See Table 23.204-1. ¹	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
C-W Designated Nodes	Retail Sales, personal and household services, retail financial services (banks), food and alcohol service, lodging, entertainment and assembly uses, gasoline/vehicle fuel stations, vehicle repair, new car sales, used vehicle sales, required access to and lobbies serving upper-story uses. Prohibited Uses: Vehicle rentals, used vehicle sales when not principally in buildings, vehicle washes, tire sales and service, open air markets, circus/carnivals. Public utility substation buildings or tanks.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
C-U	See Table 23.204-1 and BMC 23.204.060.B.	Residential Only Uses, Ground floor residential uses (incl. leasing and management offices and other similar resident-serving uses).	12 ft.	15% 10% with Use Permit	50%	No minimum	No maximum
C-U Designated Node	Residential uses must be integrated with non-residential uses in a mixed-use development.	N/A	12 ft.	30% 20% with Use Permit	75%	75% 50% with Use Permit	25%

¹ Mixed-use projects in C-W are subject to permit requirements in Table 23.204-41.

² Calculated as percent of project land area.

³ Calculated as percent of project’s University Avenue frontage.

⁴ Calculated as percentage of minimum required ground floor commercial floor area.

Appendix A.2

Table 1: Housing Sites Inventory for the Plan Area and City of Berkeley

	City (sites)	SPA SP (sites) (% of City)		Affordability												Total		
				Extremely Low / Very Low			Low			Moderate			Above Moderate			City (units)	SPA SP (units) (% of City)	
Pipeline Sites - Applications Under Review or Anticipated	69	15	22%	437	134	31%	142	54	38%	41	30	73%	3,991	921	23%	4,611	1,139	25%
Likely Sites - Entitled Projects since 2018	48	9	19%	133	34	26%	166	0	0%	9	0	0%	1,793	486	27%	2,101	520	25%
Opportunity Sites: Underutilized	158	46	29%	1,571	560	36%	1,557	555	36%	1,831	473	26%	1,205	337	28%	6,164	1,925	31%
Opportunity Sites: Vacant	101	5	5%	37	0	0%	36	0	0%	36	36	100%	216	62	29%	325	98	30%
Total	376	75	20%	2,178	728	33%	1,901	609	32%	1,917	539	28%	7,205	1,806	25%	13,201	3,682	28%

Source: City of Berkeley, 2023. 2023-2031 Housing Element Update. Tables C-3, C-6, and C-10.

Appendix B: Opportunity Sites

San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

Adopted – September 29, 2026

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Opportunity Sites Tables

Table 1: List of 2023-2031 Housing Element Update Opportunity Sites Within the Specific Plan Area

HE Site Number	APN	Address	Vacant Lot	Existing Land Use	Acres
12a	060 235401100	1041 GILMAN ST	No	Parking lot	0.19
12b	060 235401302	1233 10TH ST	No	Parking lot	0.32
12c	060 235401200	1031 Gilman St	No	Parking lot	0.15
13a	057 208801100	1071 UNIVERSITY AVE	No	Parking lot	0.3
13b	057 208801500	1917 10TH ST	No	Parking lot	0.25
15a	059 228702500	1629 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story retail (party store)	0.11
15b	059 228702400	1633 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story retail (party store)	0.11
15c	059 228702102	1639 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-2 story commercial	0.3
16	060 235401001	1049 GILMAN ST	No	1-story retail (liquor, Dollar Tree)	0.61
17	059 233100200	1440 SAN PABLO AVE	No	2-story freestanding furniture strip retail and parking lot (West Berkeley Commercial Center)	0.67
18	056 198303103	2235 SAN PABLO AVE	No	2-story storage facility and parking lot (Berkeley Self Storage)	0.7
19	056 193200803	2424 SAN PABLO AVE	No	Self-service car wash	0.73
22	056 193300602	2332 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story commercial building and open lot dedicated to plants - East Bay Nursery	1.03
32	054 178000801	2546 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story Bank of America (temporarily closed) and large parking lot	1.43
38	057 208502600	1111 UNIVERSITY AVE	No	1-story commercial (Halmar Work Clothes Center)	0.47
46	056 198304001	2197 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story standalone restaurant (Jack in the Box) and parking lot	0.4
47a	060 240502100	1275 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story garage or storage facility	0.06
47b	060 240502000	871 HILLSIDE AVE	No	1-story auto-related office and parking lot (smog shop)	0.29
48a	058 212701200	1730 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story commercial (building materials store); adjacent to parking lot	0.07
48b	058 212701101	1726 SAN PABLO AVE	No	Parking lot for building materials store	0.14
48c	058 212700901	1724 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story retail (Cafe Leila, accessories shop) and parking lot	0.26
49a	053 166101900	1043 HEINZ AVE	No	Large parking lot and single family house	0.2
49b	053 166101801	2840 SAN PABLO AVE	No	Parking lot	0.26
50a	060 240401801	1399 SAN PABLO AVE	No	Chevron Gas Station	0.21

50b	060 240402000	1337 SAN PABLO AVE	No	Autobody shop and parking lot	0.22
51a	053 166101400	2830 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1- story commercial	0.15
51b	053 166101501	2832 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1- story commercial	0.31
52a	057 208901201	1011 UNIVERSITY AVE	No	2-story standalone vacant commercial building (former Premier Cru wine store).	0.24
52b	057 208901500	1925 9TH ST	No	Public land, parking lot behind Bauman College	0.15
53	056 192802701	2407 SAN PABLO AVE	No	Cement lot with storage sheds	0.36
54	056 198200201	2111 SAN PABLO AVE	No	Parking lot	0.42
55	057 208602903	1819 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story autobody shop and parking lot, (Nate's Green Garage, auto detailing)	0.42
56	056 193200401	2400 SAN PABLO AVE	No	2-story retail and cement lot (Nu Gu Na restaurant + Ohmega Salvage)	0.44
58	056 197300601	1010 UNIVERSITY AVE	No	UA Homes parking lot	0.46
59	056 197800802	2040 SAN PABLO AVE	No	Vacant 1-story commercial building	0.46
107a	057 208500702	1187 UNIVERSITY AVE	No	1-story laundromat, last sold in Oct 2016, 10 surface parking spaces, no lease or tenant data available on CoStar, Walker's Paradise (97), Good Transit (65); lot owned by same owner as adjacent lot (057 208500801)	0.08
107b	057 208500801	1181 UNIVERSITY AVE	No	1-story restaurant (Eat @ Thai – tenant since Jul 2016), no sale data available on CoStar; Walker's Paradise (97), Good Transit (65); lot owned by same owner as adjacent lot (057 208500702)	0.11
109	056 197900100	1198 UNIVERSITY AVE	No	Auto car wash	0.28
111	060 239501700	1501 SAN PABLO AVE	No	Vacant 1-story commercial building	0.07
112	053 166202100	2835 SAN PABLO AVE	No	Vacant 1-story commercial building (former BPOE Lodge - permanently closed)	0.08
113a	060 239503100	1513 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story autobody shop	0.06
113b	060 239503301	1507 SAN PABLO AVE	No	Vacant 1-story storefront for sale	0.15
114	060 239500100	1100 PAGE ST	No	Parking lot	0.11
115	060 240502401	1229 SAN PABLO AVE	Yes	Vacant 1-story commercial building, for sale sign	0.12
116	053 166200101	2825 SAN PABLO AVE	Yes	Vacant lot	0.17
117	060 240503101	1205 SAN PABLO AVE	Yes	Vacant lot	0.17
118	056 192602000	2309 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story commercial + parking lot (Afghan Burrito)	0.19
121	053 162901901	2959 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story commercial/auto-related use (Berkeley Star Smog)	0.25
122	057 208800400	1900 SAN PABLO AVE	Yes	Vacant lot	0.27

124	056 193302403	2366 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story commercial building + parking lot (Berkeley Patients Group)	0.33
195	059 228702000	1117 VIRGINIA ST	Yes	Vacant lot, same owner as 1639 San Pablo	0.06

Table 2: San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Proposed Opportunity Sites

SP Add. Sites #	APN	Address	Vacant Lot	Existing Land Use	Acres	Site Criteria / Rationale
A	053 165200105 and 053 165200101	1099 ASHBY AVE	No	1 and up to 3 story commercial with large surface parking	6.32	Large property with significant surface parking, overall low FAR. Could infill parking lot with structured parking and new development. Historic buildings likely a combination of preserving some full buildings and some only preserving street facing facades. Have factored down site area to assume 60% of total site being developed.
B	053 166102000	1035 HEINZ AVE	No	1 story light industrial	0.14	Same ownership as adjacent HE Opportunity site parcels.
C	053 166102100	1033 HEINZ AVE	No	1 story light industrial	0.12	Small property surrounded by other properties under one ownership.
D	053 162802601	2995 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1 story commercial and surface parking lot	0.60	Large parcel with vacant building (former Walgreens) and relatively low FAR
E	054 178601600 and 054 178601401	2625 AND 2641 SAN PABLO AVE BERKELEY	No	1 story commercial and surface parking lot	0.44	Two parcels with one owner, low FAR current development
F	054 178401900	2551 SAN PABLO AVE BERKELEY	No	1 story commercial with side service and parking area	0.32	Currently a towing service, low FAR
G	056 193300500	2300 SAN PABLO AVE BERKELEY	No	Surface Parking Lot	0.23	Different owner address from adjacent East Bay Nursery (a HE Opp Site) but both in Moraga; suspect could be one development project
H	57-2085-7-1	1199 UNIVERSITY AVE	No	1-story commercial building (Foster's Freeze)	0.21	Same ownership as adjacent HE Opportunity site parcels.
I	57-2085-14-1	1101 UNIVERSITY AVE	No	1 story 2-3 tenant commercial building with some parking	0.30	Has been vacant for several years, appeared to have last sold in 2023

J	057 208901401	1001 UNIVERSITY AVE	No	1-2 story community building	0.48	This is the city-owned parcel at northeast corner of 9th and University.
K	057 208800500 and 057- 2088-6	1920 and 19xx SAN PABLO AVE	Yes	1 parcel w/ 1 story commercial building and some open space other parcel vacant	0.32	Same ownership two parcels
L	060 235401403	1235 10TH ST	No	1-story commercial building and parking	0.26	C-W zoned property about 0.6 FAR recommending to add to Gilman Node
M	060 235400300 and 060 235400402	1212 and 1214 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1- story vacant commercial building and 1-story light industrial/auto serving bldg	0.29	Same owner as approved project to the north
N	060 239501600	1443 SAN PABLO AVE	No	1-story commercial building	0.17	HE Opp Site #114 is a parking lot that serves adjacent building and has same property owner.
O		1095 University Ave	No	2-story vacant commercial	0.11	Former Wells Fargo Bank building

Opportunity Sites Key Map

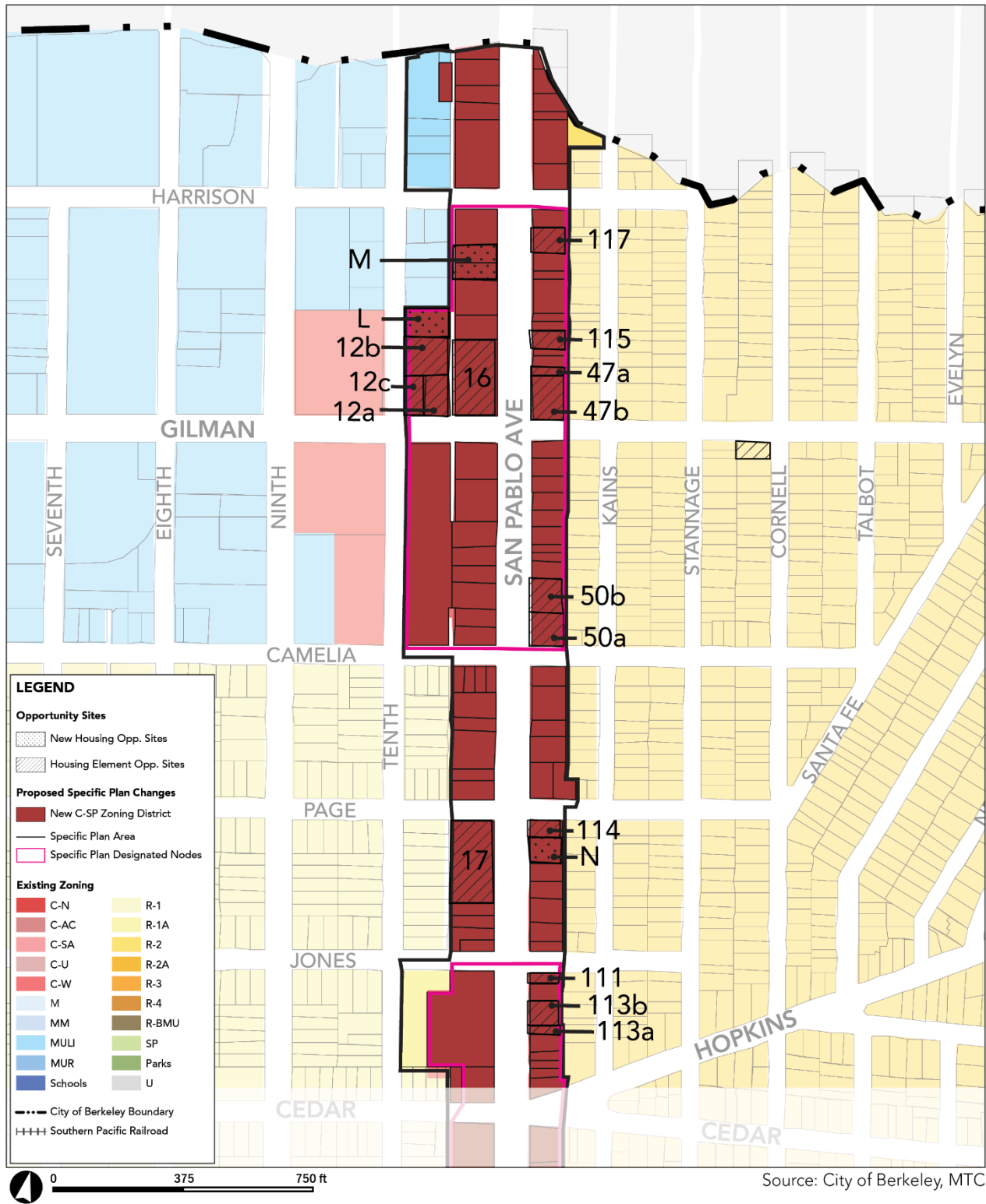


Figure B.1 Opportunity Sites Map – Part 1

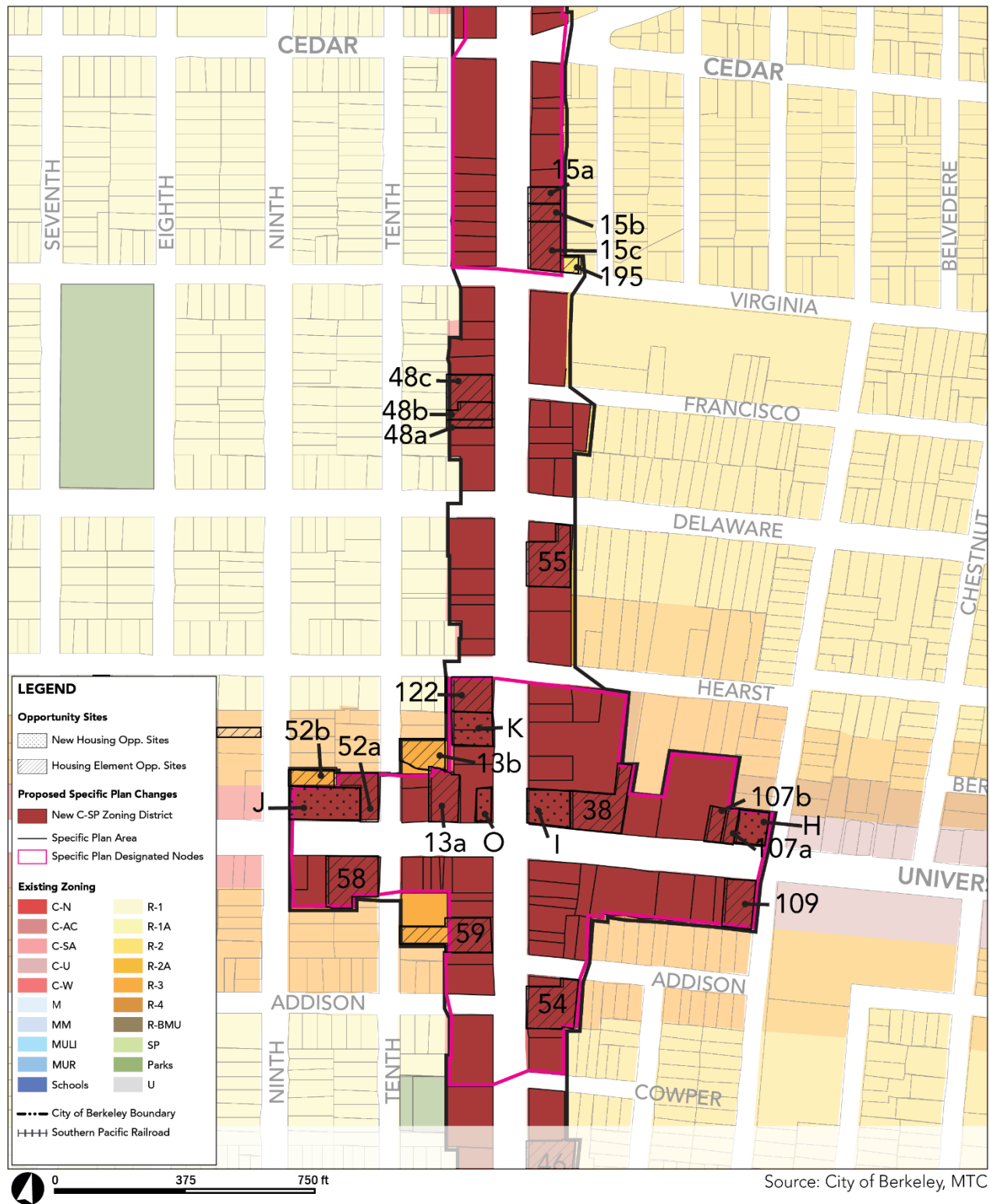


Figure B.2 Opportunity Sites Map – Part 2

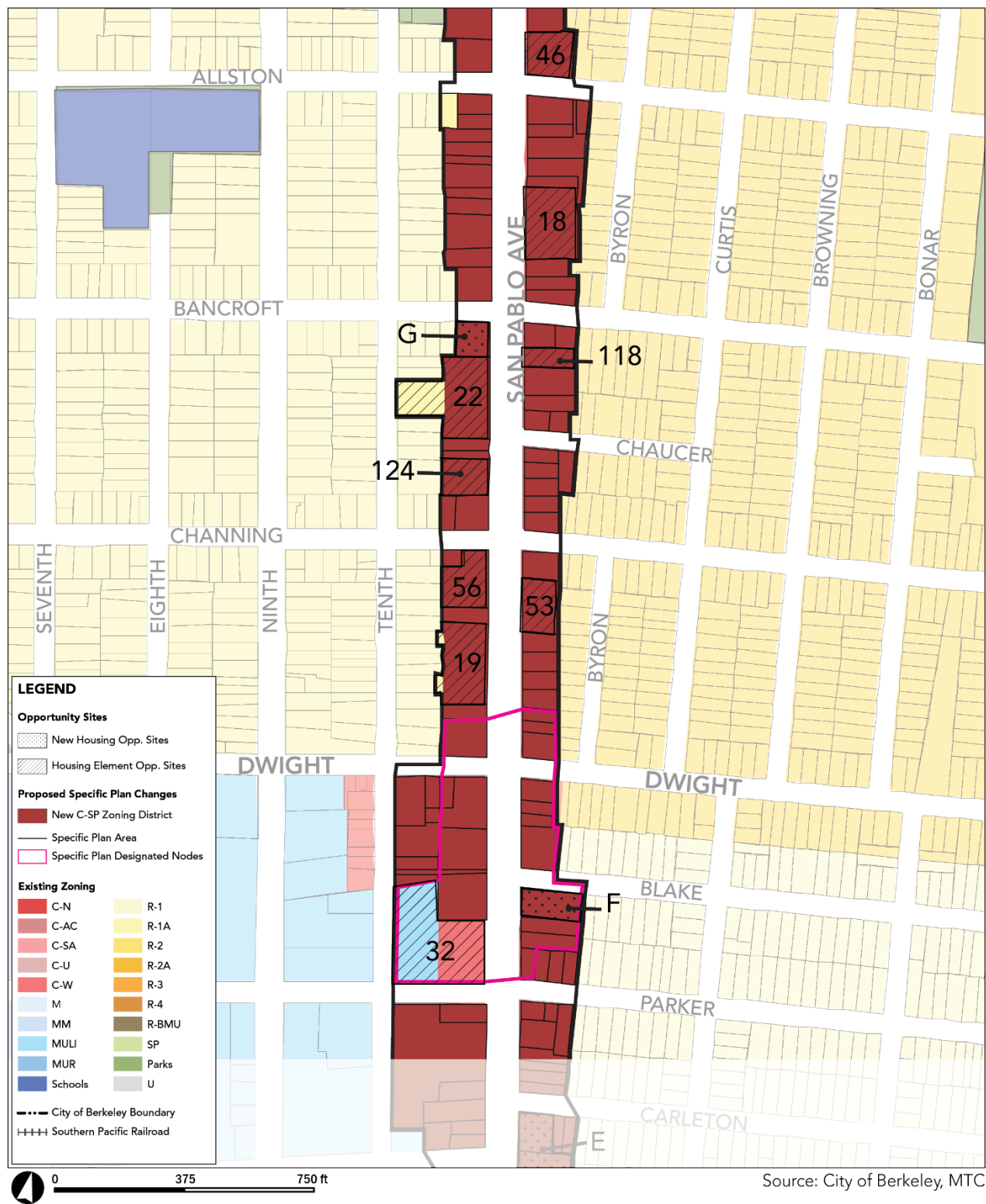


Figure B.3 Opportunity Sites Map – Part 3

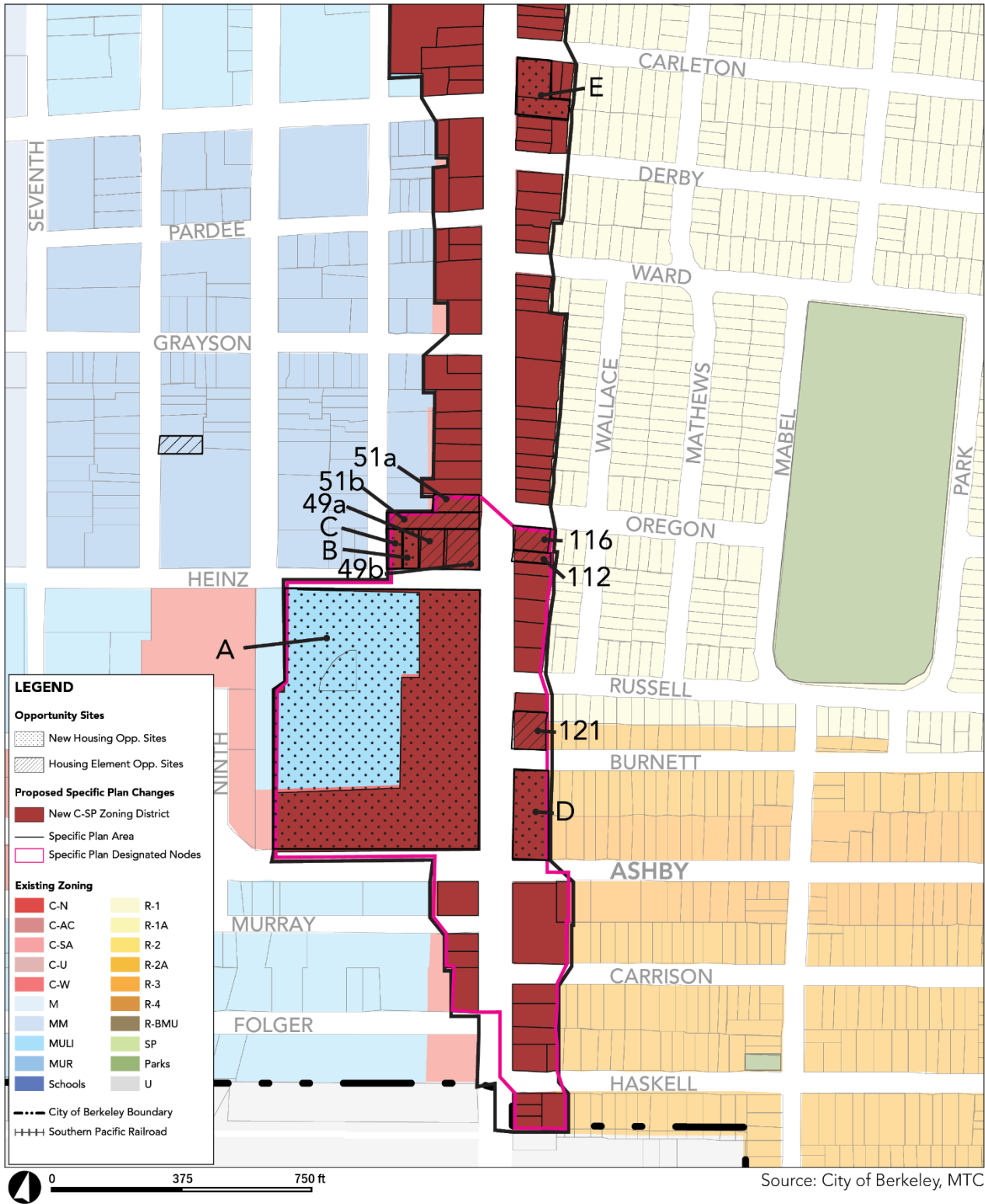


Figure B.4 Opportunity Sites Map – Part 4

Appendix C: Buildout Summary Memorandum

San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

Adopted – September 29, 2026



San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

Date: October 29, 2024 (Revision #6 – September 30, 2026)

To: City of Berkeley

From: Community Design + Architecture
Urban Planning Partners

Re: San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan (SPA SP) – Task 5.3 Build-out Summary Staff Memorandum

The planning process considered, with feedback from the Planning Commission and City Council in November 2025 and March 2026 and the City Council approval of the San Pablo Specific Plan on September 29, 2026, alternative standards for allowable height and density for the Commercial San Pablo (C-SP) Zoning District based on land-use and location, and impacts on potential residential and commercial buildout, affordable housing production, and economic development policy. This appendix outlines the finalized building height and density standards within the Plan Area and the anticipated development buildout with these standards.

Height Standard

Comparison between C-W to C-SP for maximum height, across uses, and node and outside of node areas¹:

- Nonresidential-only: increase from 3 to 5 stories, maximum of 75 feet
- Residential-only: increase from 3 to 7 stories, maximum of 75 feet
- Mixed-use: increase from 5 to 7 stories, maximum of 75 feet

Policy Implications

Developers often treat **8 stories** as a practical feasibility threshold for residential and mixed-use residential projects because it often represents the upper end of **cost-efficient mid-rise construction** (5 floors of wood-frame over three stories of concrete). Previous development proposals and approved, but yet unbuilt, projects along San Pablo Avenue have included a mix of six to eight story buildings, as going above six stories adds floor that must be concrete and the increase in construction cost can be difficult for market rents to support. As buildings push beyond a mid-rise envelope—exceeding the 85-foot mid-rise threshold—projects typically face more stringent life-safety and structural requirements (concrete and steel with no wood structure). This transition can significantly increase both hard and soft costs, and, as a result, many developers will choose to cap project heights between **6 to 8 stories** even when zoning allows eight or more and will not use the State Density Bonus Law (SDBL) to exceed eight stories. Still, future market conditions are unpredictable, especially in the longer-term life of the Plan, and it is possible that buildings up to 12 stories could be viable in the future. If condominium construction liability issues are addressed through state legislation, the value of condominiums could make taller buildings more feasible.

Summary of Implications

Use of State Density Bonus Law: It is likely that the percentage of housing and mixed development projects using the SDBL will not significantly vary across the policy options outlined above. Currently developers use the SDBL for both increasing

¹ The C-SP zoning increase the floor area ratio (FAR) for uses that have increases in height.

density and to remove standards and regulations to improve project feasibility. So, in the future it is likely that developers will still use the SDBL to remove these standards and regulations, while not using it to increase height **beyond 8 stories** and/or density.

Affordable Units: Increased heights and FARs have the potential to generate more affordable housing, because the Berkeley Inclusionary Affordable Housing requirements are calculated using the number of units in the base condition for a project using the State Density Bonus project.

Implications and Rationale

State Density Bonus Law and Berkeley Affordable Inclusionary Housing Requirement: Permitting 7 stories by-right reduces the incentive to use SDBL to increase density, because many projects can reach their target unit yield within the base envelope. Developers may still elect to use SDBL, but more likely to obtain concessions and waivers that help project feasibility (e.g., relief from specific development standards, parking, setbacks, open space, design constraints) rather than to add units given anticipated market demand.

This dynamic matters because SDBL benefits (density and concessions) are tied to the level and depth of affordability provided. If a project can achieve its target unit count by-right, the developer may choose to provide only the minimum affordable set-aside necessary to unlock the number of concessions they want—rather than the larger or deeper affordability unit mix that might have been offered when SDBL was the primary pathway to unlock additional height and FAR. Berkeley’s Affordable Inclusionary Housing Requirement applies to all development projects, including those that use SDBL. The city requires that 20% of a project’s units be affordable and provides the option to pay a fee rather than providing the units within the project. For a project using SDBL, the city requirement applies to the number of units in the “base” project (the project based on existing zoning densities) and does not apply to any additional units resulting from use of SDBL waivers.

Most recent mixed-use and residential development proposals in Berkeley use SDBL to waive both height and FAR maximums in order to unlock the optimum density for development feasibility, and to concession out of requirements that would increase the cost of development. Typically, the number of affordable units needed for the number of concessions the developer wants is a lower percentage than the 20% required by the city’s affordable housing requirements. The affordable units used for SDBL are required to be in the project and typically developers choose to pay an in-lieu fee for the additional affordable units required by the City’s requirements.

As mentioned above, the increased height standards will reduce or eliminate the use of the SDBL for increasing density. Developers will provide SDBL inclusionary affordable units to gain the concessions for removing City requirements that increase their development cost. The increase of maximum allowed height and FAR potentially grows the number of units in the “base” project, and, therefore, increases the total number of affordable units required in the project, because the City’s affordable housing requirement applies to this higher number of base units. It is possible that the increase in affordable units could make a project that maximizes height and number of units less feasible compared to development under an option with a lower maximum zoning height that uses SDBL to increase height. This is difficult to predict, and typically the cost over the life of a project is less for the in-lieu fee compared to providing inclusionary units with the lower rents they provide.

Buildout Assumptions

Residential Density: The starting point for the residential density assumptions and methodology used in this buildout analysis are the density assumptions and methodology used for the 2023 Berkeley Housing Element. The Housing Element states, “*The City estimated development potential for the sites by calculating the average baseline density (without density bonus) achieved for recently approved, under construction, or completed mixed-use and residential projects per zoning district.*”² For determining the buildout for the Plan Area, adjustments are made to the Baseline density assumptions in the Housing Element based the modifications to zoning and development standards in the Plan Area.

² City of Berkeley Housing Element 2023-2031; as amended on February 17, 2023; page C-17.

Commercial Density: Commercial intensity refers to the net amount of commercial space anticipated in future mixed-use developments, calculated similar to how average residential density is assessed in the Housing Element.

The analysis calculates net commercial square footage by comparing existing commercial space as defined through the Assessor's Use Codes with the average new commercial area that recent mixed-use development projects have proposed. The existing commercial space area (square feet) on housing opportunity sites was estimated using data from the County Assessor's office with some adjustments made from review of aerial photographs and data included in staff reports for proposed development projects. The commercial space within new mixed-use developments was estimated based on recently constructed and proposed mixed-use projects in the Plan Area, applying an average FAR of 0.12 to the total site acreage of mixed-use projects in each development scenario. The net reduction in commercial space is derived by adding the estimate of new commercial space in mixed use developments to the estimated loss of existing commercial space due to the demolition of existing buildings on the housing opportunity sites.

Development Buildout: The development buildout (see Table C.1) applies the C-SP Zoning to the sites identified in the Baseline, the 15 additional housing opportunity sites identified through the Plan community assessment work (see Figure C.1), and expanded C-SP nodes compared to the existing C-W nodes. The buildout also includes the following assumptions:

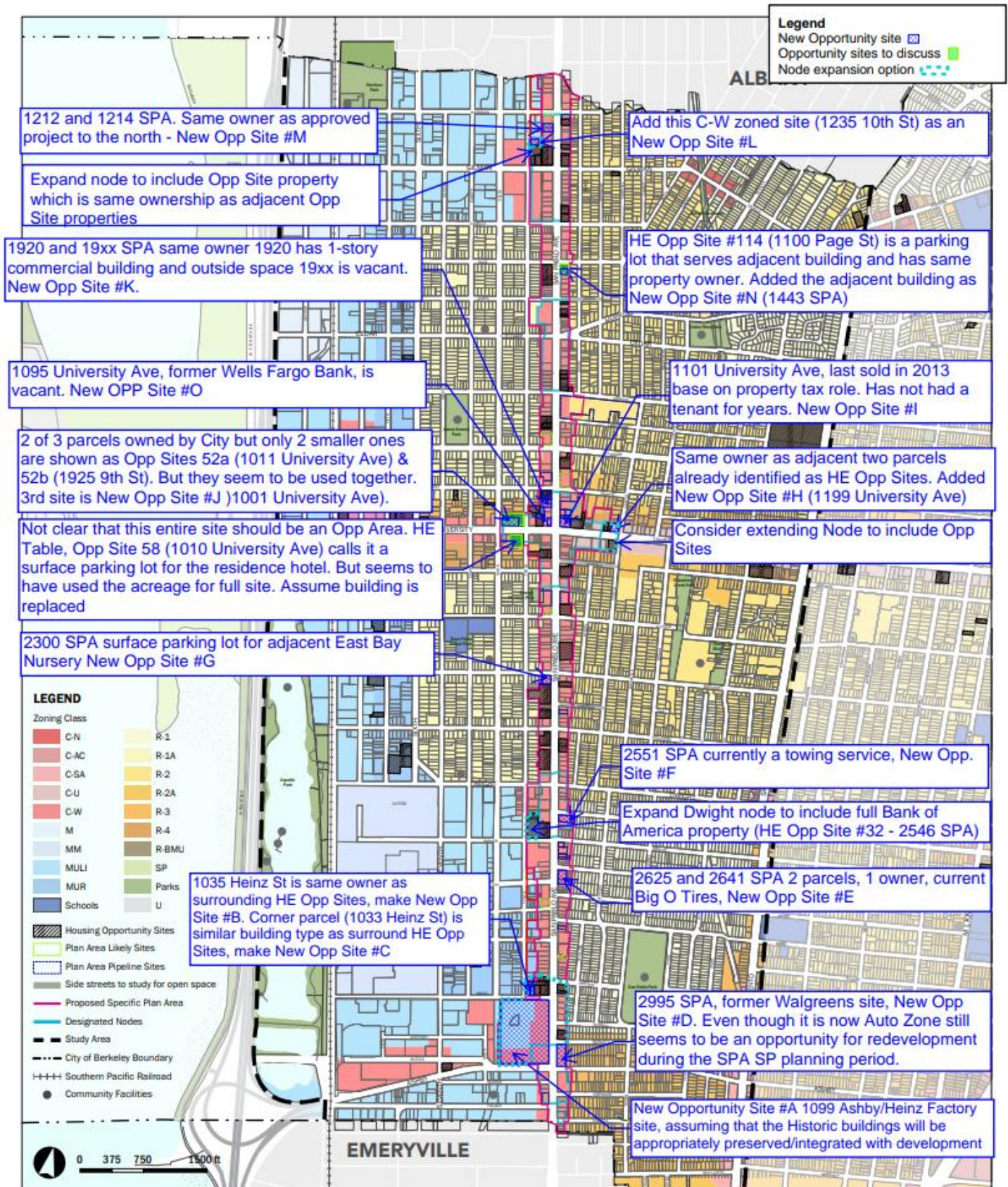
- **Re-zonings:**
 - Rezone existing C-W zoned parcels within the Plan Area to C-SP.
 - Rezone existing C-U parcels within the Plan Area to C-SP.
 - Rezoning some parcels to eliminate existing split-zoned properties. These changes are limited to parcels fronting on either San Pablo Avenue or University Avenue. In cases where the split zoned portion of a parcel fronts on a side street, the split zone is maintained.
- **Housing Overlay:**
 - Assumes C-SP development standards for 100% affordable or family housing on MU-LI sites.
- **Density Outside the Nodes:** The Plan increases density for residential only and mixed-use buildings by adjusting the allowable heights from 50-feet to 75-feet, and allowable FAR from 3.0 to 4.25, which permits up to 7 stories while accounting for a taller ground floor and a roof parapet. The Plan adjusts the density assumption used for the HEU opportunity sites of 135 du/ac to 215 du/ac based on the assumption that 70% of development outside of the nodes will be residential only use developments.
- **Density in Nodes:** The Plan increases density for residential and mixed-use buildings by adjusting the allowable height from 50-feet to 75-feet and allowable FAR from 3.0 to 4.25, which permits up to 7 stories while accounting for a taller ground floor and a sloping roof parapet. The Plan increases the density assumptions from the HEU opportunity sites of 135 du/ac to 210 du/ac based on an assumption that accounts for commercial space on the ground floor which is required within nodes by the C-SP zoning.

Table C.1. Height and Density in the C-SP Zoning District

	Existing C-W	New C-SP
Non Res-only	3 stories 40' max. height 3.0 max FAR	5 stories 75' max. height 3.0 max FAR
Res-only	3 stories 40' max. height 3.0 max FAR	7 stories 75' max height 4.25 max FAR 150 du/ac
Mixed-use	4 stories 50' max. height 3.0 max FAR	7 stories 75' max height 4.25 max FAR 145 du/ac
Estimated Residential Buildout without SDBL (units)	4,900³	6,900
Estimated Residential Buildout with SDBL (units)	7,000-8,000	7,000-8,000
Estimated Plan Area Commercial Space (sq. ft.)	1,202,400	1,171,000
Estimated Change in Plan Area Commercial Space Resulting from Buildout of Housing Opportunity Sites (sq. ft.)	-288,200	-319,600

³ New Residential Buildout without SDBL for the opportunity sites identified in the 2023 Housing Element Update is 3,500 units.

Figure C.1. Addition Housing Opportunity Sites in the Plan Area



Appendix D:

Street Improvements

San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

Adopted – September 29, 2026

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Overview

This appendix provides an overview of transportation projects that are already underway at the time of the Specific Plan's publication, along with recommended improvements at key locations identified through the planning and community engagement process. Many of these projects are expected to be implemented in the coming years and will significantly reshape travel conditions in the area. The Specific Plan's proposed improvements are designed to build upon this ongoing work, treating these near-term changes as the new baseline for future transportation planning and investment.

Comprehensive List of Existing Projects

City of Berkeley Projects

Current Projects (2025)

Parker-Addison Mobility and Safety Improvements Project¹

This project will provide a bike boulevard and associated improvements to connect the West Street multiuse pathway to San Pablo Park via Bonar and Mabel Streets. The project also includes a new bike boulevard on Parker Street from San Pablo Avenue to Mabel Street.

Addison Street Bike Boulevard Connector Project²

The Addison Bike Boulevard will provide an east-west connection between Milvia Street and Sacramento Street to connect West Berkeley to Downtown Berkeley. The Project proposes a Class III bike boulevard on Addison Street from the Aquatic Park eastward to Sacramento Street and from Martin Luther King Jr. Way through downtown to Oxford Street. It would connect to the previously-constructed (phase 1) portion of this project between Sacramento Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way, thereby creating a continuous bike boulevard from the Aquatic Park to the western edge of the UC Berkeley campus. The project also includes construction of a Class IV separated bikeway connector across San Pablo Avenue to reduce future collision risk for vulnerable users crossing the street and will address a key barrier to east-west bicycle connectivity; this connector on San Pablo Avenue will be implemented as part of the Alameda CTC Safety Enhancements Project, described below.

Street Rehabilitation - Hopkins Corridor Improvements³

This project includes Hopkins Street from San Pablo Avenue to Sutter Street. The project began in 2020 and was put on hold in 2023. As of the fall of 2025 there is no definitive timeline has been established for restarting the effort.

Other Currently Planned Projects

Ashby/San Pablo Traffic Improvements – Design is currently underway for this intersection improvement project, which includes a dedicated left-turn lane with a signal phase and upgraded curbs to enhance safety and traffic flow. Construction is anticipated in Fiscal Year 2027.

¹ City of Berkeley. [Parker-Addison Mobility and Safety Improvements Project](#). City of Berkeley. Accessed 6 May 2025.

² City of Berkeley. [Addison Street Bike Boulevard Connector Project](#). City of Berkeley. Accessed 6 May 2025.

³ City of Berkeley. [Street Rehabilitation – Hopkins Corridor Improvements](#). City of Berkeley. Accessed 6 May 2025.

Alameda CTC Projects

The Specific Plan will not focus on making transportation improvements to San Pablo Avenue, because the Alameda Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC) has completed a multimodal planning study for San Pablo Avenue throughout Alameda County. The study has led to three improvement projects that will result in construction of safety improvements for all users, bus stop improvements, and parallel bicycle facility improvements, as well as a short segment of bicycle and bus lanes on the southern end of San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley:

The Parallel Bike Improvement Project

This will construct bike safety and connectivity improvements and pedestrian, ADA upgrades along streets parallel to San Pablo Avenue, as well as creates safer bicycle crossings for existing or proposed bicycle routes as designated in the Berkeley Bike Plan (2017). Improvements on parallel streets will create or enhance bike boulevards consist of diverters, traffic circles, modifications to existing stop controls, speed humps, and wayfinding improvements for bicycles. This project is expected to start construction in 2026 and be completed in 2027. See **Chapter 5 – Streets**, Figure 5.8 *Connections Map*.

The Safety Enhancements Project

This will construct improvements for pedestrians and cyclists to cross San Pablo Avenue more easily and improve transit speed and reliability along San Pablo Avenue. Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements on San Pablo Avenue include median islands, and crossing beacons; and the Class IV separated bikeway on San Pablo Avenue between the off-set intersections with Addison Street. This project will also include ADA upgrades to curb ramps. Transit improvements include bus stop bulb-outs for high-use stops, intersection lighting upgrades, and some bus stop relocations to improve safety and bus operations. Within Berkeley, improvements will extend between Heinz Avenue and the northern city limit. This project is expected to start construction in 2026 and be completed in 2027.

The Bus and Bike Lanes Project

This project is located primarily within the Cities of Oakland and Emeryville, and will convert one travel lane in each direction on San Pablo Avenue to a bus-only lane and convert on-street parking lanes to separated bike lanes. In Berkeley, the Project's bicycle improvements will extend along San Pablo Avenue from the southern city limit to Heinz Avenue, approximately 0.25 miles, and the bus improvements will end at the Ashby Avenue intersection. This project will start the Project Approval and Environmental Document phase in summer or fall of 2026 and 2035 is estimated date for completion of construction.

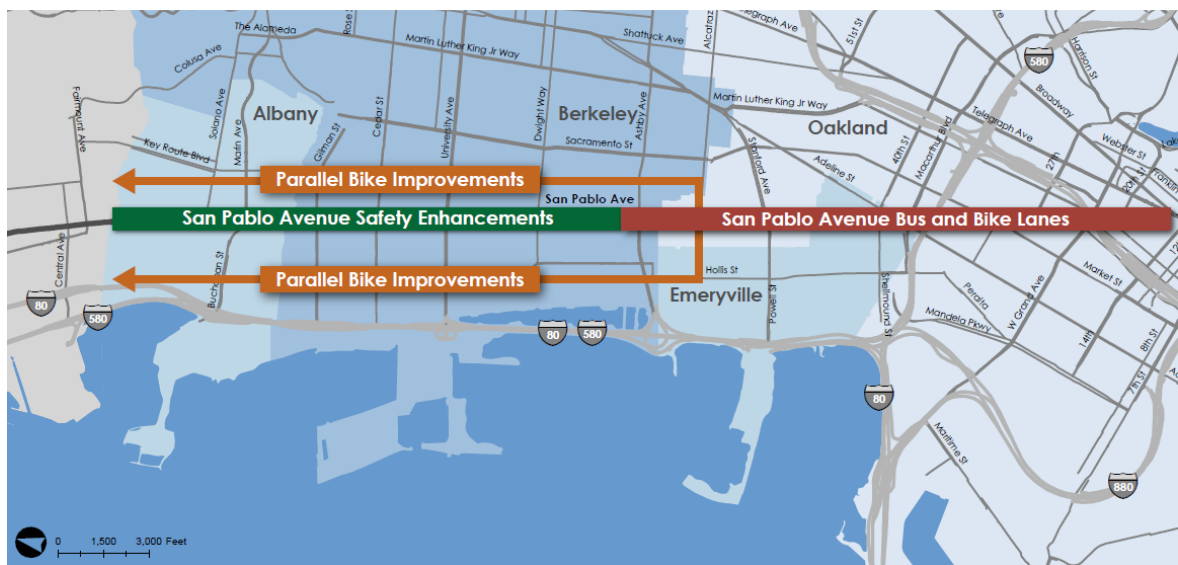


Figure D. 1 Alameda CTC. San Pablo Avenue Multimodal Corridor Overview Map

Alameda Countywide Bikeways Network

In December 2022, the Commission adopted a resolution establishing an All Ages and Abilities (AAA) bikeways policy and standard. The policy directs that Countywide Bikeway Facilities incorporate AAA design principles, as defined by the [National Association of City Transportation Officials \(NACTO\) Contextual Guidance for Selecting All Ages and Abilities Bikeways](#). This policy aligns with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's existing standards for the regional [Active Transportation Network](#), of which the Countywide Bikeways Network is a subset. As San Pablo Avenue is designated as a major bus and bikeway corridor within the Countywide Network, it is subject to these design expectations.

Proposed Improvements

The Specific Plan summarizes a set of recommended improvements that are not currently addressed by existing or planned projects from the City of Berkeley and Alameda CTC. The methodology for summarizing these recommendations integrates proposals from the Pedestrian Plan (2020) and the Berkeley Bike Plan Update (2026), and was further refined through input from City of Berkeley staff and accident history. The **Table D.1 List of Intersection Improvements** providing an overview of these proposed improvements, listing strategies to address existing mobility gaps and plan for enhancements beyond currently planned projects. This list is intended to be a living document and updated periodically as conditions change, evolving safety needs, community input, and coordination with future planning and capital improvement efforts. For example, the city will likely be updating the Pedestrian Plan in the next couple of years. Many of intersection improvements listed below align with Policies and Standards presented in **Chapter 5 – Streets, Continue to improve Intersections** section of the Specific Plan.

Figure D.2: Connections & D3 Mid-Block and Side-Street Plaza Options presents a consolidated overview of potential pedestrian crossing locations based on *T-P.9 Pedestrian Crossing Frequency*. It also provides an overview of potential side-street plaza sites, policy *PR-P.15 Create Side-Street Plazas*.

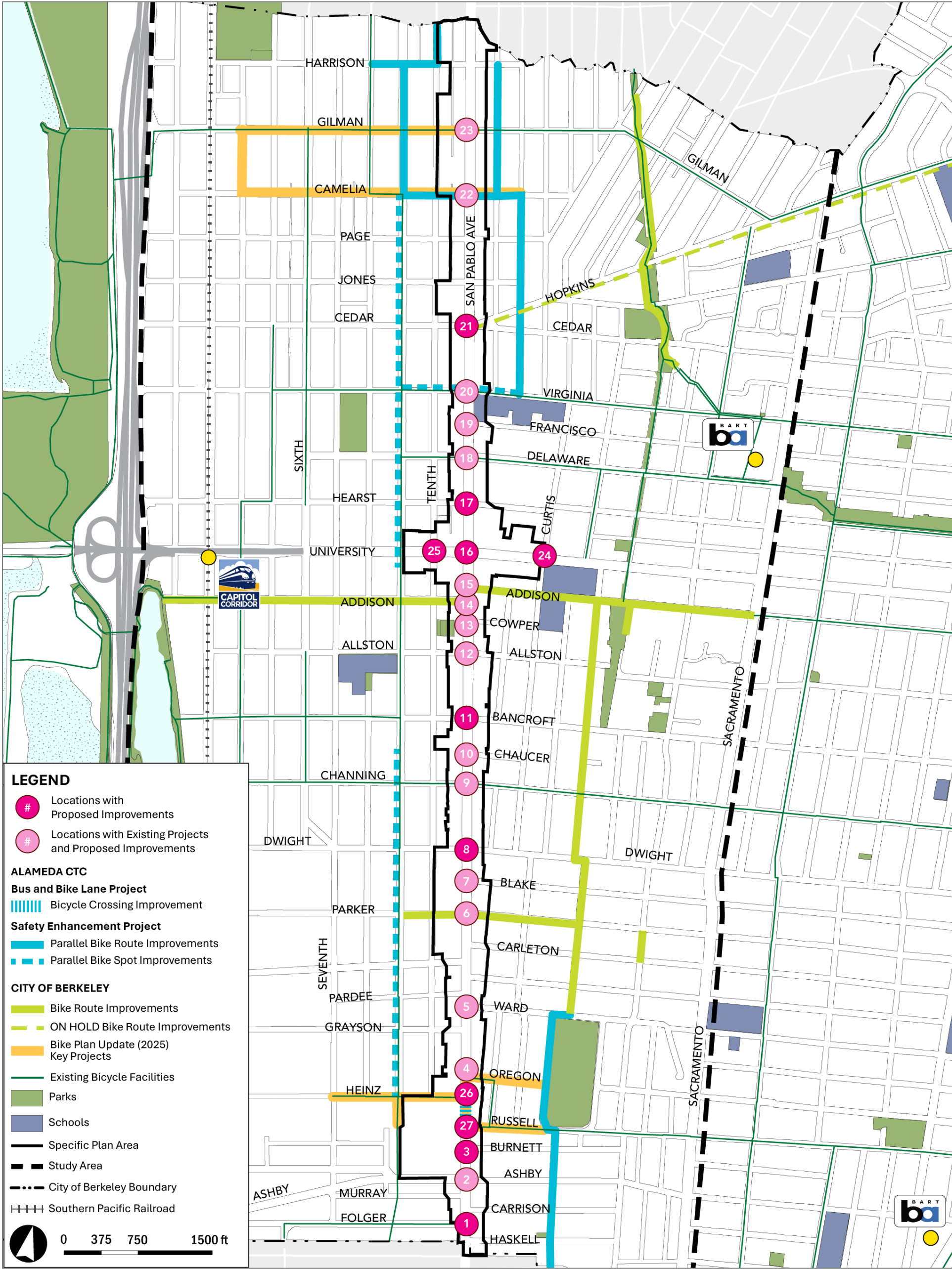
Table D.1 List of Intersection Improvements

No.	Existing Project not considered in Prop. Improvements	Proposed Improvement	Nearest Intersection	Source
0		Potential Improvement to study during update to the Pedestrian Plan: North bound bus stop is not proximate to a crosswalk and John Muir Car Center and a large sports club are on the east side of the street. Existing cross walks at the far north and south sides of intersections. Resulting in an over 380 foot distance between protected crossings of San Pablo Avenue.	67 th Street and Folger Avenue intersections with San Pablo Ave	Public comment during SPA SP process
0		Potential Improvement to study during update to the Vision Zero Action Plan and/or Pedestrian Plan: Public comment was made regarding bicycle and pedestrian collisions and safety concern with vehicles making turns at this signalized intersection.	Grayson Street and San Pablo Ave	Public comment during SPA SP process
1		RRFB and Ped Refuge Island	Folger Ave and San Pablo Ave	City Staff
2	Others	Restrict Right Turn on Red, Median Refuge Island, Curb Extension, Widen Sidewalk at Bus Stop Pedestrian Plan (2020): High-Visibility Crosswalk, Hardened Centerline	Ashby Ave and San Pablo Ave	City Staff
3		RRFB and Ped Refuge Island	Burnett St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff
4	Alameda CTC And City of Berkeley	RRFB at South Leg (where Safety Enhancement Project is implementing a Pedestrian Refuge Island) Potential Protected Intersection improvements connecting with Separated Bike Lanes on San Pablo Ave. to Heinz St. (see Intersection 26)	Oregon St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff Bike Plan Update (2026)
5	Alameda CTC	RRFB at North Leg	Ward St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff
6	City of Berkeley	Bike Crossing	Parker St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff
7	Alameda CTC	RRFB at South Leg	Blake St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff

No.	Existing Project not considered in Prop. Improvements	Proposed Improvement	Nearest Intersection	Source
8		Median Refuge Island	Dwight Way and San Pablo Ave	City Staff Bike Plan Update (2026)
9	Alameda CTC	Raised Crosswalk Diverter (with PHB)	Channing Way and San Pablo Ave	City Staff Bike Plan Update (2026)
10	Alameda CTC	RRFB	Chaucer St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff
11		Widen Sidewalk at Bus Stop, High-Visibility Crosswalk, Curb Extension, Median Refuge Island	Bancroft Way and San Pablo Ave	City Staff Pedestrian Plan (2020)
12	Alameda CTC	High-Visibility Crosswalk, Consolidate Driveways, Curb Extension, Median Refuge Island, Widen Sidewalk at Bus Stop	Allston Way and San Pablo Ave	Pedestrian Plan (2020)
13	Alameda CTC	RRFB, Curb Extension	Cowper St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff Pedestrian Plan (2020)
14	City of Berkeley	Median Refuge Island on Southern Addison 2-Way Cycle track Connector	Southern Addison St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff Bike Plan Update (2026)
15	City of Berkeley	Bike Box for left-turning North bikes turning onto San Pablo. Bike signal detection and RRFB/PHB for peds and bikes coming from the northern Addison who will then turn left going SB on San Pablo and then turning right to head WB on Addison. Raised Crossing for ped/ bikes 2-Way Cycle track Connector	Northern Addison St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff Bike Plan Update (2026)
16		Restrict Right Turn on Red, Median Refuge Island, Curb Extensions	University Ave and San Pablo Ave	City Staff Pedestrian Plan (2020)
17		Ped Refuge Islands	Hearst Ave and San Pablo Ave	City Staff
18	Alameda CTC	Ped Refuge Islands. Tighten Intersection	Delaware St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff
19	Alameda CTC	RRFB	Francisco St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff
20	Alameda CTC	Raised Intersection	Virginia St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff
21		Median Refuge Island, Widen Sidewalk at Bus Stop	Cedar St and San Pablo Ave	Bike Plan Update (2026)

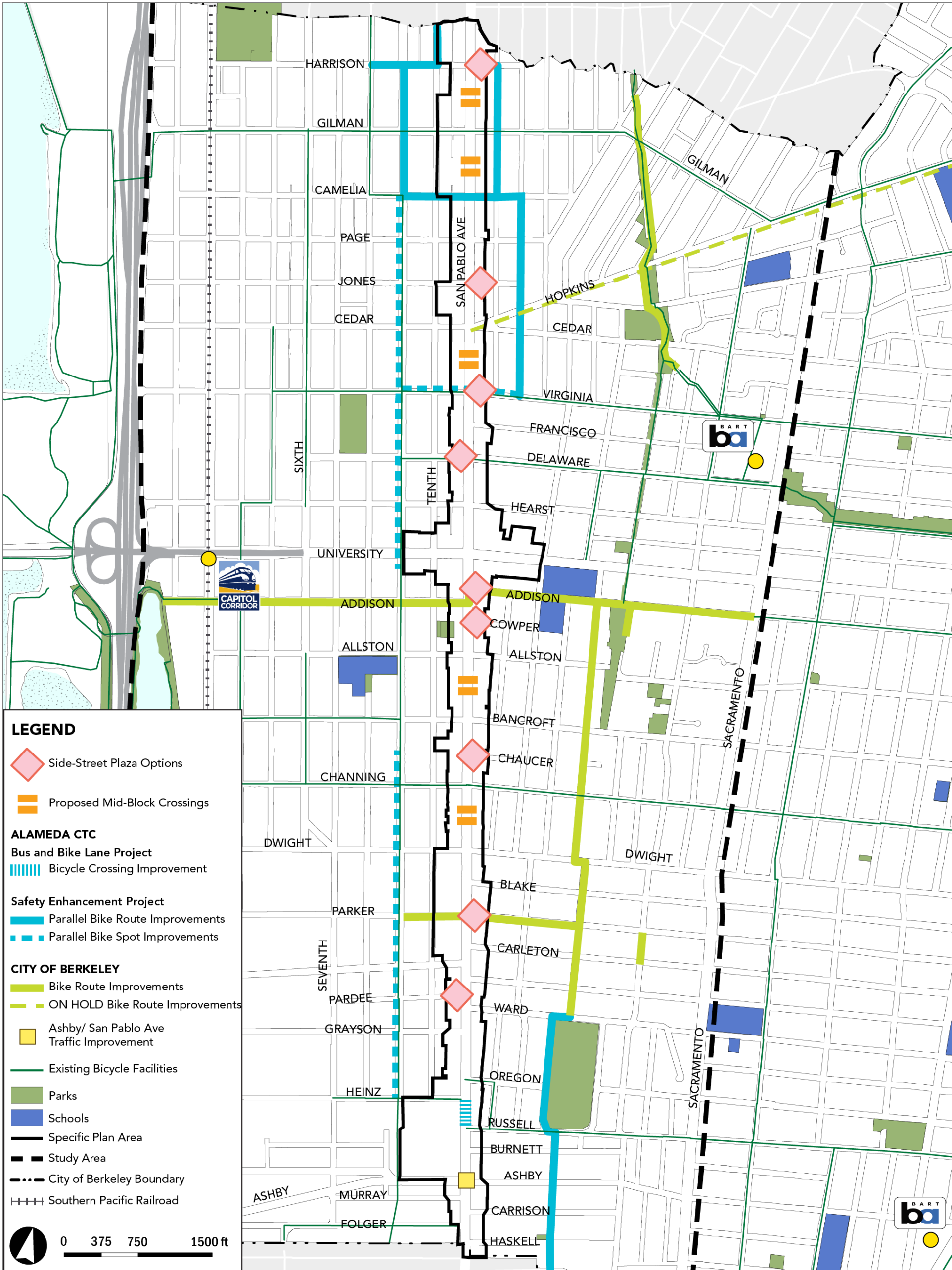
No.	Existing Project not considered in Prop. Improvements	Proposed Improvement	Nearest Intersection	Source
22	Alameda CTC	Raised Intersection PHB	Camelia St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff Bike Plan Update (2026)
23	Alameda CTC and City of Berkeley	Ped Refuge Islands Potential Protected Intersection Treatments on west side and shortening of pedestrian crossing of Gilman St	Gilman St and San Pablo Ave	City Staff Bike Plan Update (2026)
24		Curb Extension, Consolidate driveways, Median Refuge	Curtis St and University Ave	City Staff
25		Curb Extension, Median Refuge	10 th St and University Ave	City Staff
26	Alameda CTC or City of Berkeley	2-Way Cycle track Connector either to Oregon St (Intersection 4) or Russell St (Intersection 27), Protected Intersection on west side, and Shortened Pedestrian Crossing.	Heinz St and San Pablo Ave	Bike Plan Update (2026)
27	Alameda CTC or City of Berkeley	2-Way Cycle track Connector to Heinz St (Intersection 26), Protected Intersection on east and west sides, and Shortened Pedestrian Crossing of Russel St, Median Refuge	Russell St and San Pablo Ave	Bus and Bike Lanes Project Bike Plan Update (2026)
Ped = Pedestrian; RRFB = Rectangular Flashing Beacons; PHB = Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons				

Figure D.2: Connections & Intersection Improvements



Source: City of Berkeley, Alameda CTC, CD+A. 2025.

Figure D.3: Connections & Mid-Block and Side Street Plaza Options



Source: City of Berkeley, Alameda CTC, CD+A. 2025.