

# Appendix A: Key Existing Conditions

## San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

- Public Review Draft -

# Table of Contents

- Introduction..... 1**
- San Pablo Specific Plan Area and Study Area..... 2**
- Community Demographic and Housing Characteristics ..... 4**
  - Population Change ..... 4
  - Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Equity..... 6
  - Household and Housing Conditions..... 8
- Infrastructure Assessment ..... 12**
- Mobility Conditions, Projects, and Planning ..... 13**
- Land Use Planning Policies and Gaps ..... 19**
  - Existing Land Use Policies and Standards ..... 19
  - Zoning..... 21
  - Existing Land Use..... 23
  - State Legislation and Regional Policies ..... 27
  - Existing Policy Capacity Assessment ..... 28
- Affordable Housing Policies and Potential Production ..... 32**
- Commercial Displacement Risk ..... 33**
  - Existing Commercial Conditions..... 33
  - Potential Future Changes to Supply of Commercial Space ..... 35
- Public Realm Assessment ..... 37**
  - Streetscape Conditions ..... 37
  - Safety ..... 40
  - Community Life along San Pablo Avenue ..... 40
- Resilience and Climate Adaptation Conditions and Plans ..... 43**
  - Existing Plans ..... 43
  - Potential Future Opportunities ..... 45
- Appendix A.1..... 47**
- Appendix A.2..... 50**

**Project Team**

- Community Design + Architecture
- Urban Planning Partners
- StreetLevelAdvisor
- InterEthnica
- Aaron Welch Planning
- Fehr & Peers
- Diablo Engineering

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 significant<sup>2</sup> 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.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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>

<sup>2</sup> 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.

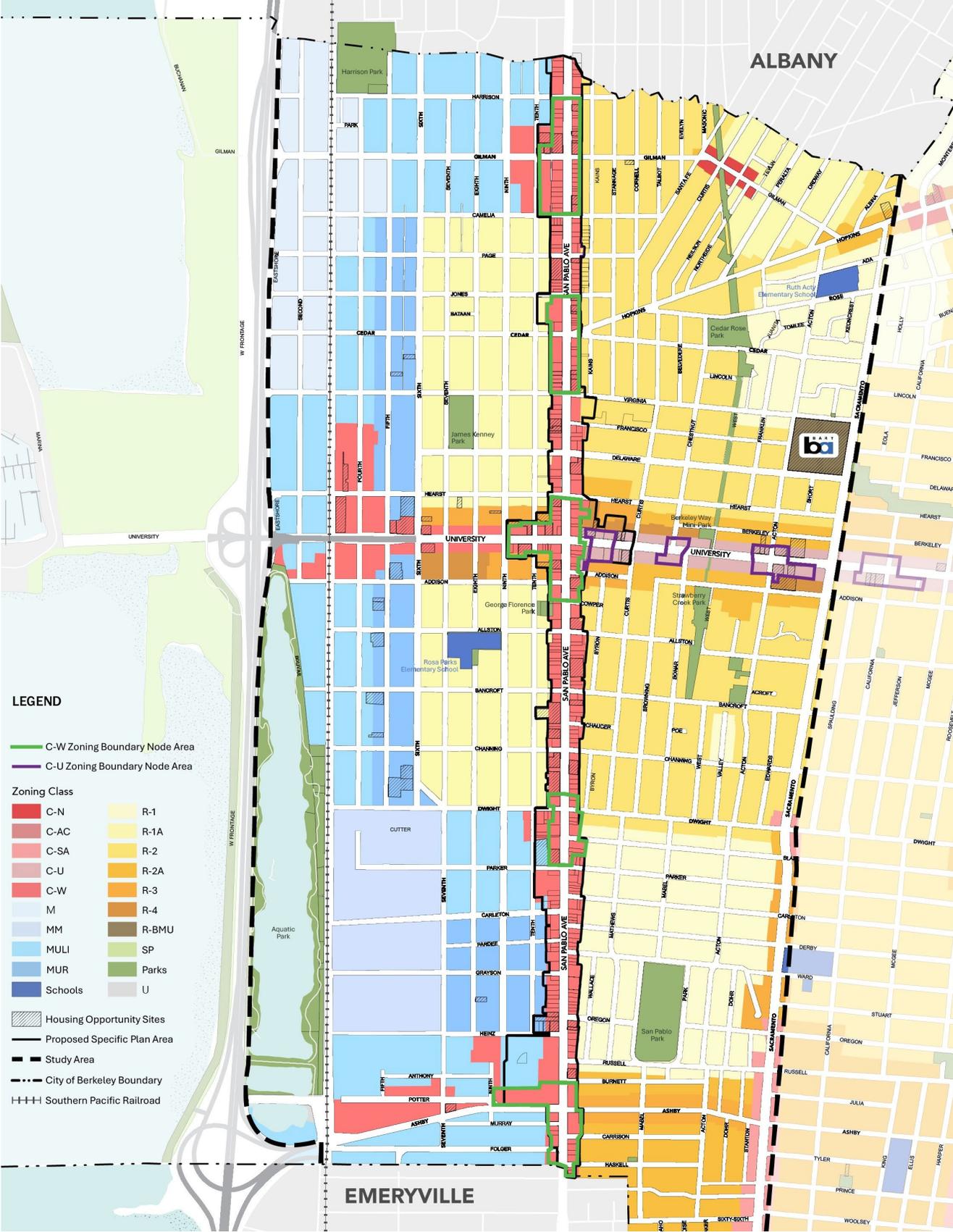


Figure 1. Proposed Specific Plan Area and Study Area. Source: City of Berkeley, 2023. Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), 2023.

# 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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup>

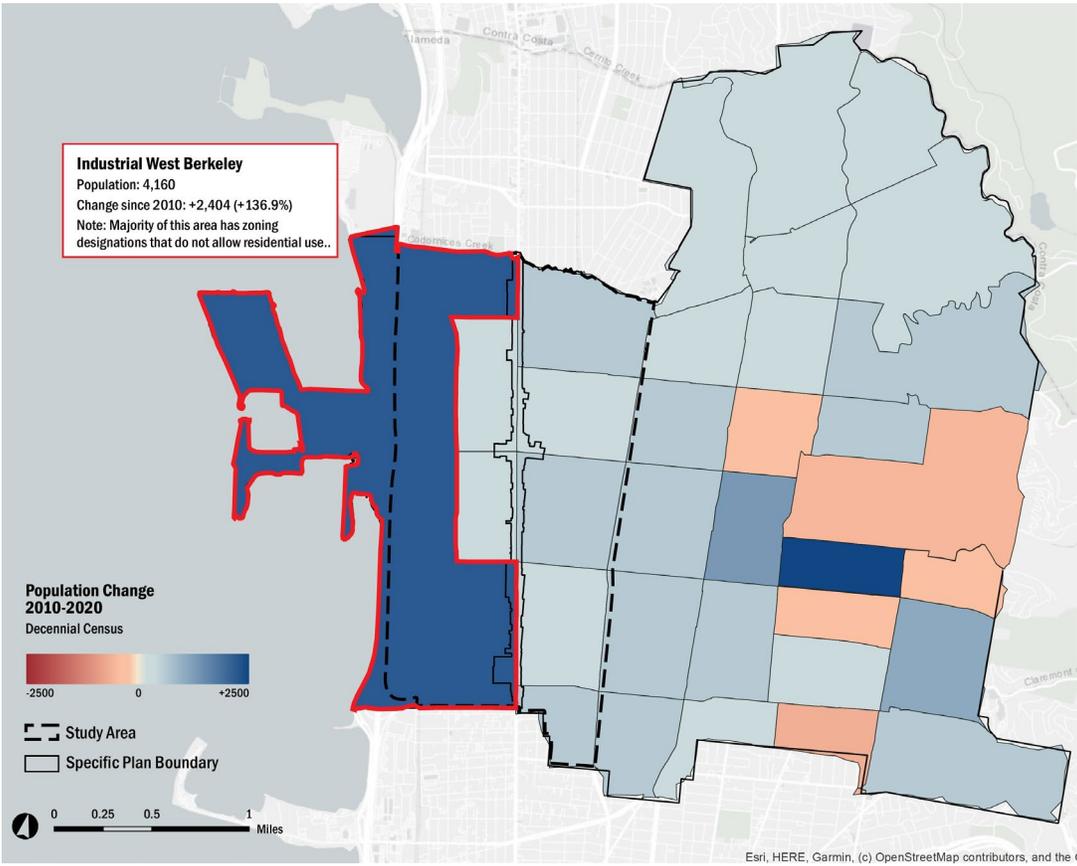


Figure 2. Population Change from 2010 to 2020. Source: United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2010, 2020, Table P1.

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

<sup>4</sup> 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>

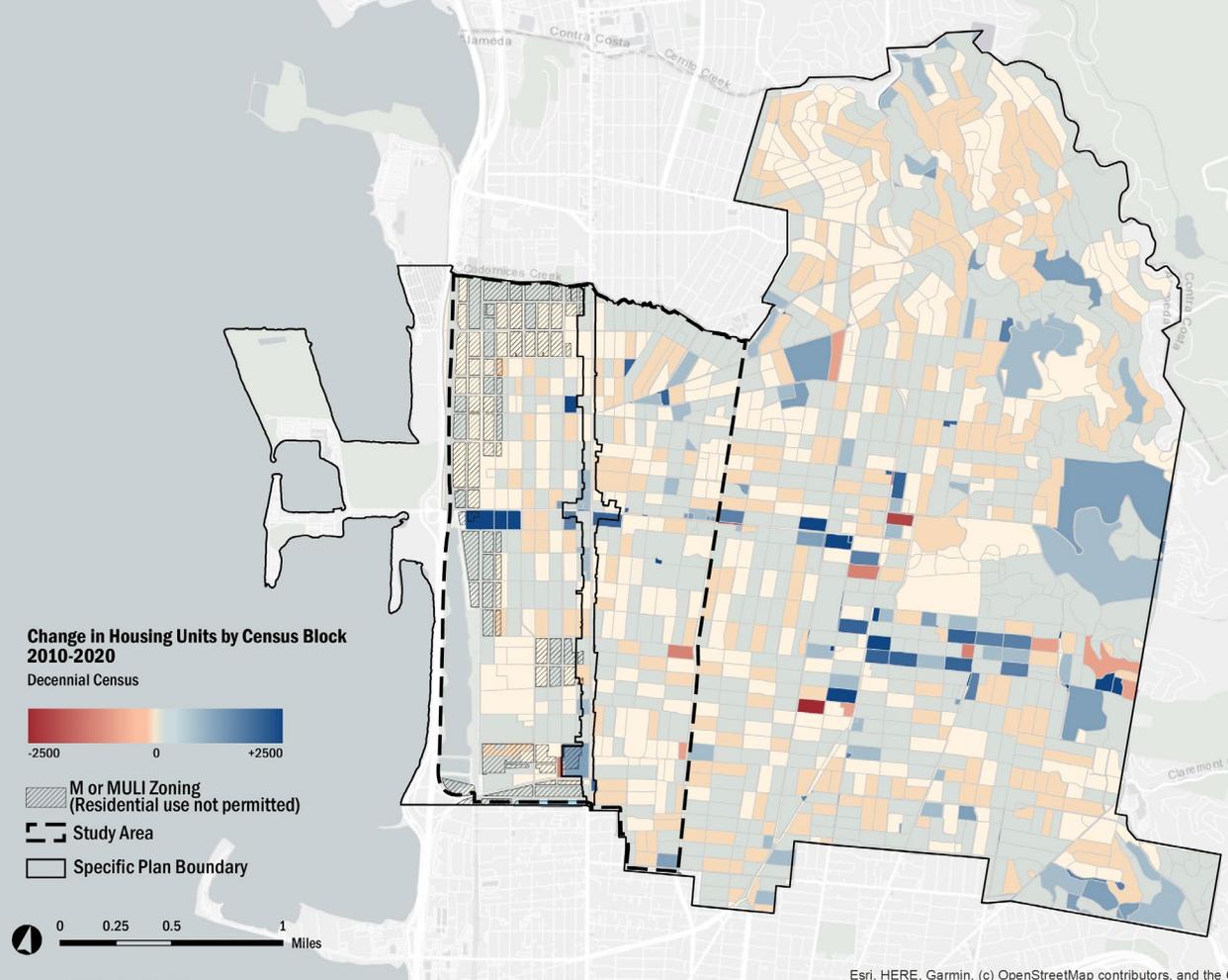


Figure 3. Change in Housing Units by Census Block, 2010 to 2020. Source: United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2010, 2020, Table H1.

# 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.<sup>5</sup> 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 Index<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

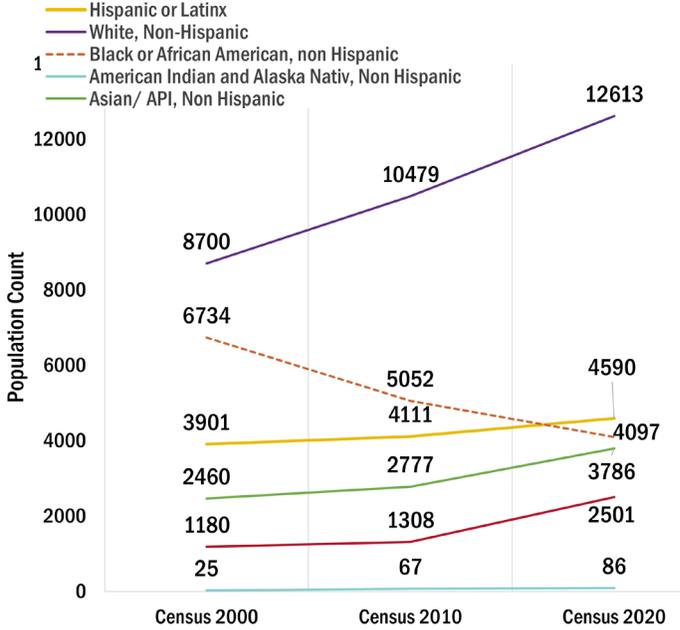


Figure 4. Population Shift by Race and Ethnicity in Study Boundary. Source: United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2010, Table P7. 2020, Table P1.



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

<sup>5</sup> United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2000, Table 7. 2010-2020 Table 9. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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)<sup>8</sup>. 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 community<sup>9</sup>

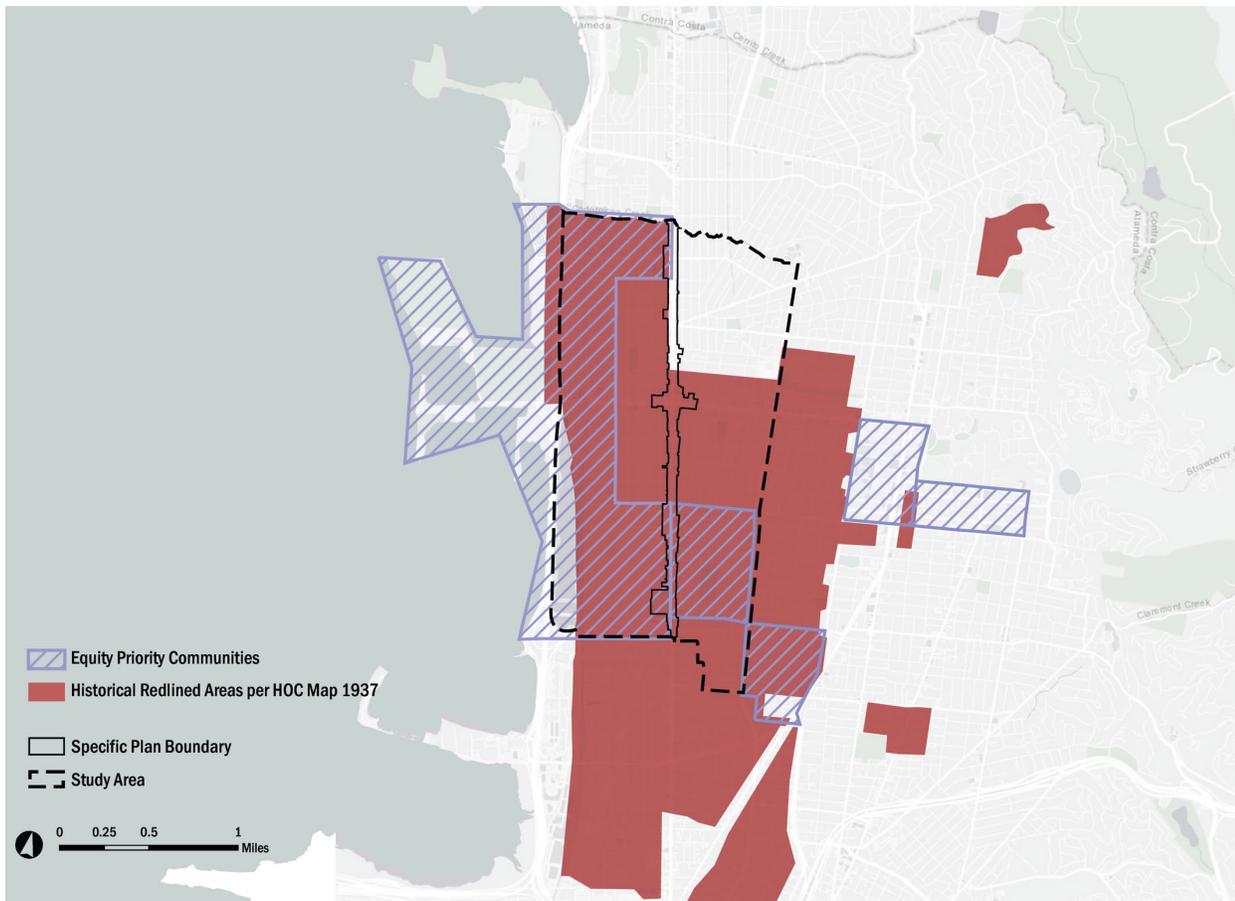


Figure 6. Equity Priority Communities and Historical Redlined Areas. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, *Mapping Redlining, 2023*. Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), *Equity Priority Communities, 2021*.

<sup>8</sup> 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>.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

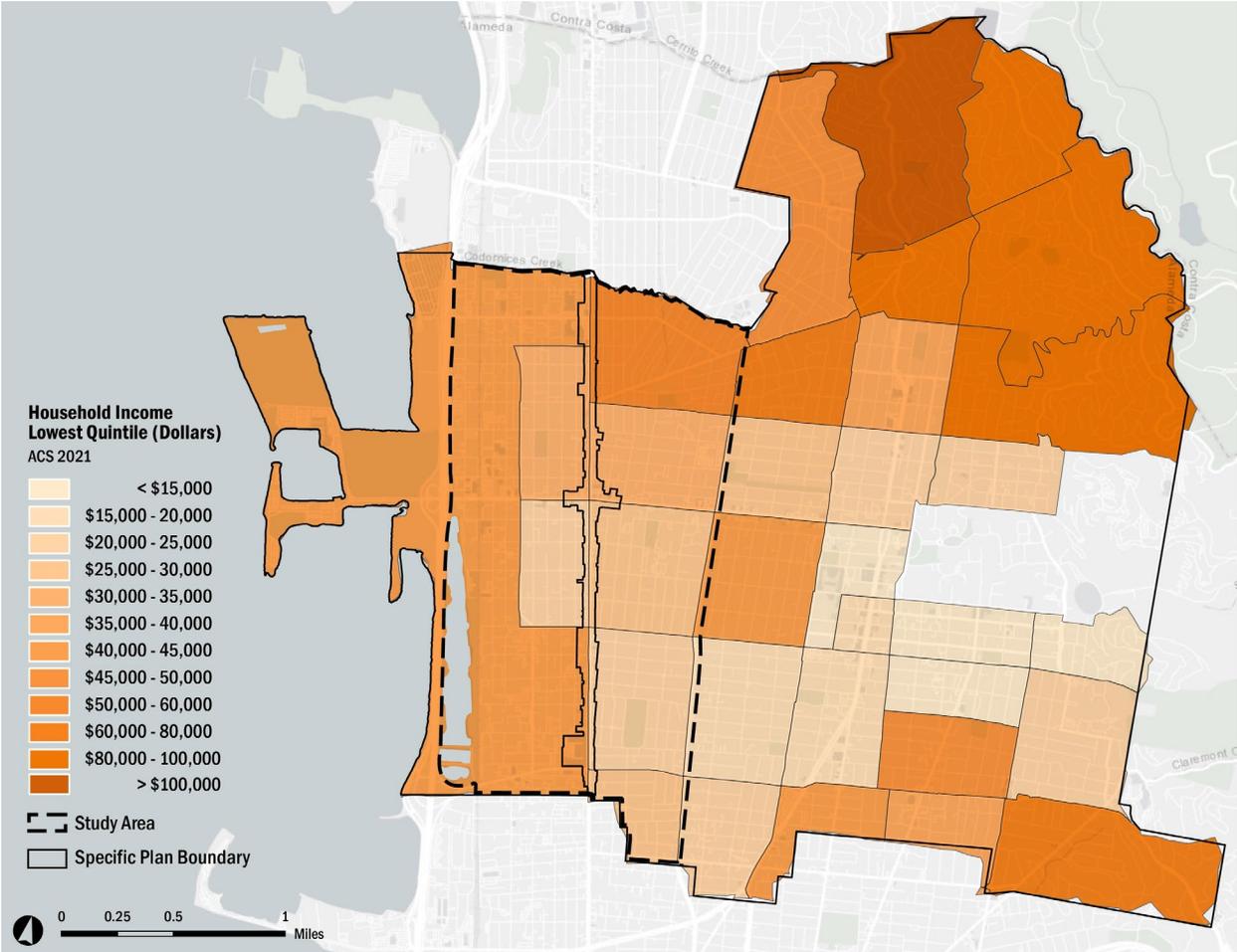


Figure 7. Household Income for Lowest Quintile. Source: United States Census Bureau. ACS. 2021, Table B19080.

### 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> In the Study Area, significantly more renter-occupied households (237) were overcrowded than owner-occupied (82 households).

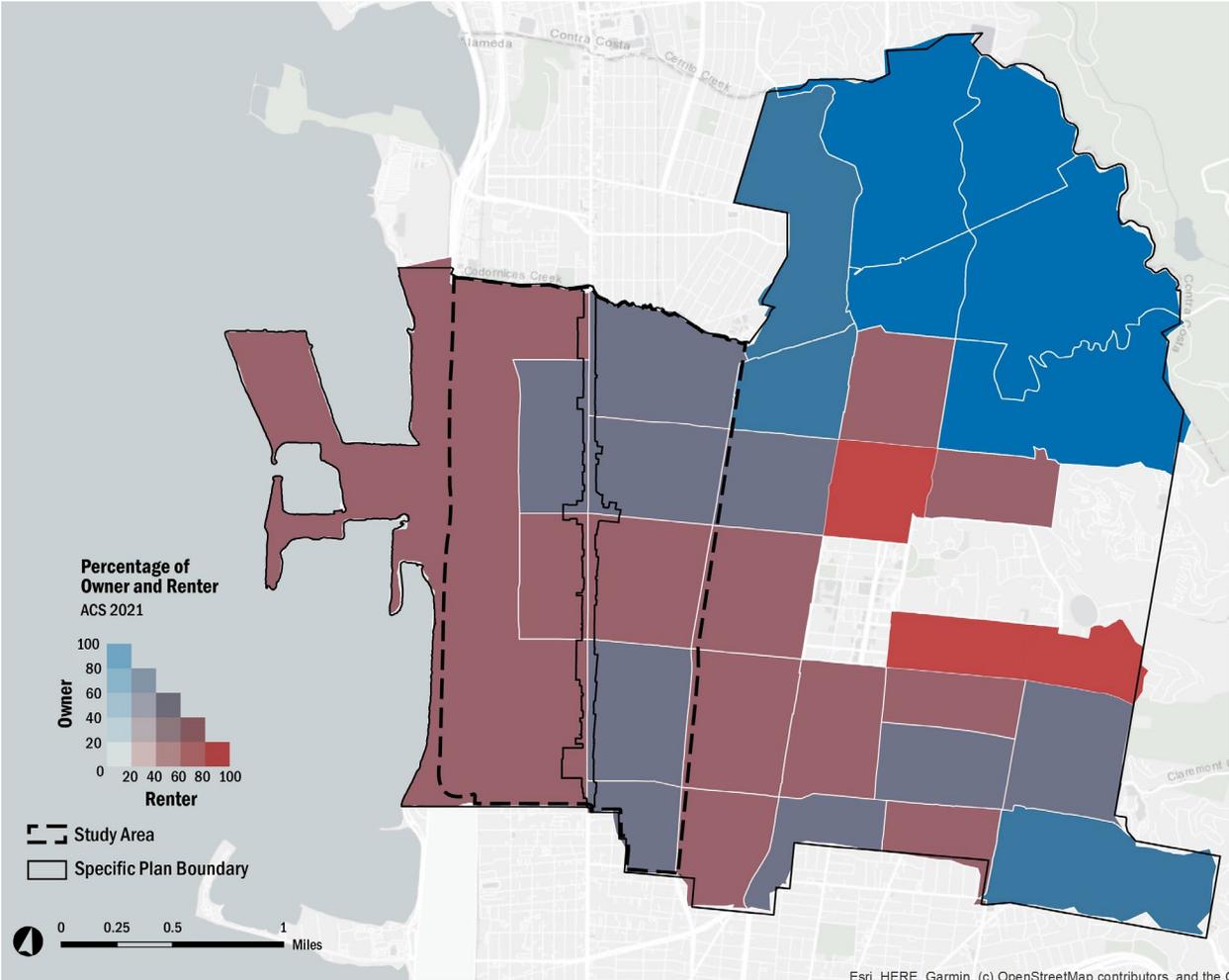


Figure 8. Mix of Households that Own or Rent in Berkeley. United States Census Bureau. ACS. 2021, Table DP04.

<sup>10</sup> United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table B25014. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>.  
<sup>11</sup> 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](https://hcd.ca.gov/planning-and-community-development/housing-elements/building-blocks/overpayment-payment-and-overcrowding).  
<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

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%.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> See **Figure 10**.

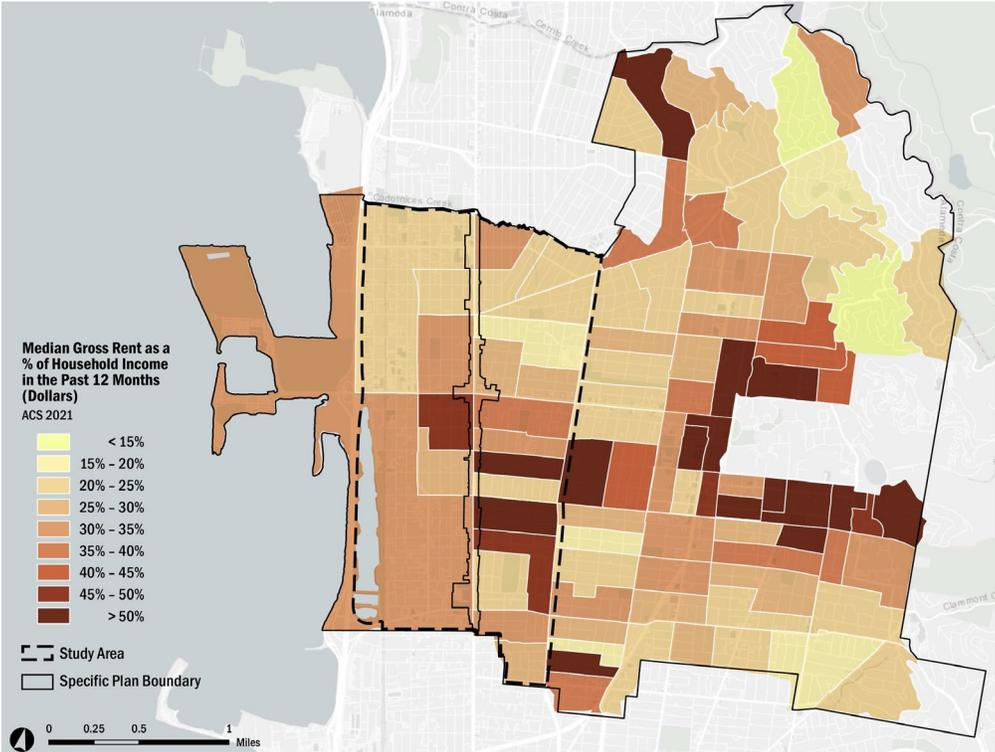


Figure 9. Median Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income. Source: United States Census Bureau. ACS. 2021, Table B25071.

<sup>13</sup> United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table S2503. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>.

<sup>14</sup> United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table B25071. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>.

<sup>15</sup> United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table B25092. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>.

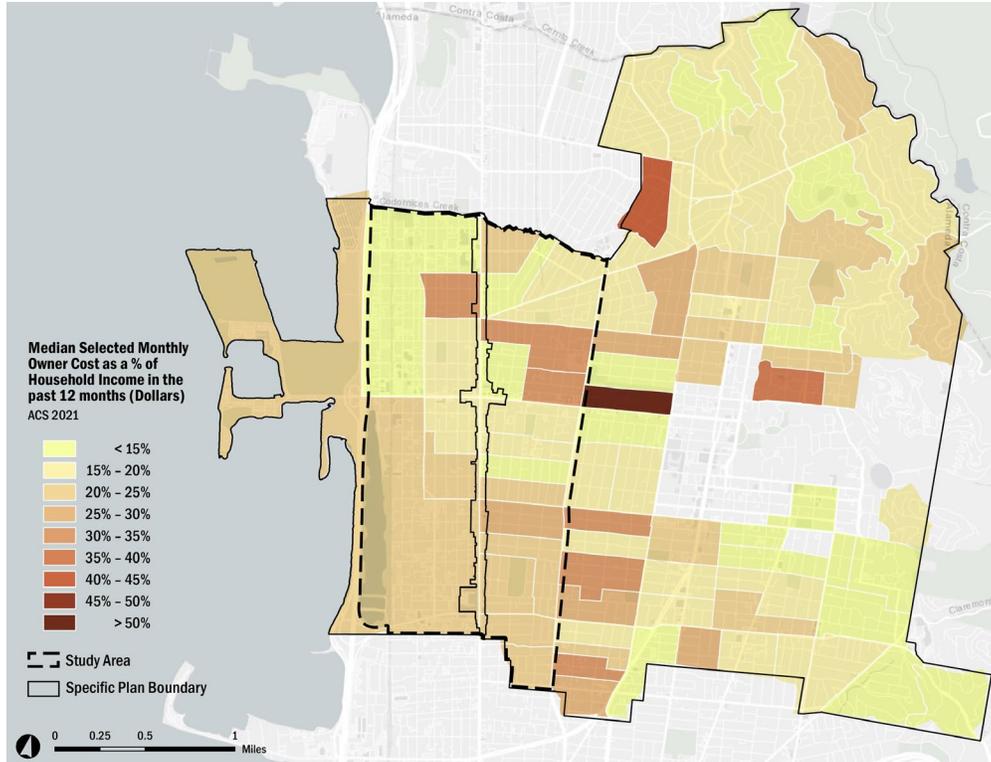


Figure 10. Median Selected Monthly Owner Cost as a Percentage of Household Income.<sup>16</sup>  
Source: United States Census Bureau. ACS. 2021, Table B25092.

## Housing Cost Burden

In the Study Area, more than half of tenants are cost-burdened,<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup>

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.<sup>19</sup>

## 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.<sup>20</sup> These households would likely be eligible for affordable housing.

<sup>16</sup> “Selected Monthly Owner Cost” includes recurring payments like dept (if any), taxes, insurance and utilizes. For more information on definition and methodology, please visit: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/HSG650221>

<sup>17</sup> 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](https://www.hud.gov/planning-and-community-development/housing-elements/building-blocks/overpayment-payment-and-overcrowding).

<sup>18</sup> United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table B25074. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>

<sup>19</sup> United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2021, Table B25074. [Online] <https://data.census.gov/>

<sup>20</sup> 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.*<sup>21</sup>

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.

---

<sup>21</sup> 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).<sup>22</sup>

## 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

<sup>22</sup> 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
<b>72 / 72M</b>	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
<b>72L</b>	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
<b>800</b>	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
<b>802</b>	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
<b>G</b>	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
<b>FS</b>	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
<b>J</b>	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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

**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.<sup>24</sup> In FY2021, the station served about 26,000 rail passengers.<sup>25</sup> 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.

---

<sup>23</sup> [Bay Area Rapid Transit 2019 Monthly Ridership Reports.](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Amtrak Capitol Corridor Schedule.](#)

<sup>25</sup> [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.<sup>26</sup>

**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**.

---

<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup>

- 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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.

---

<sup>27</sup> 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**.

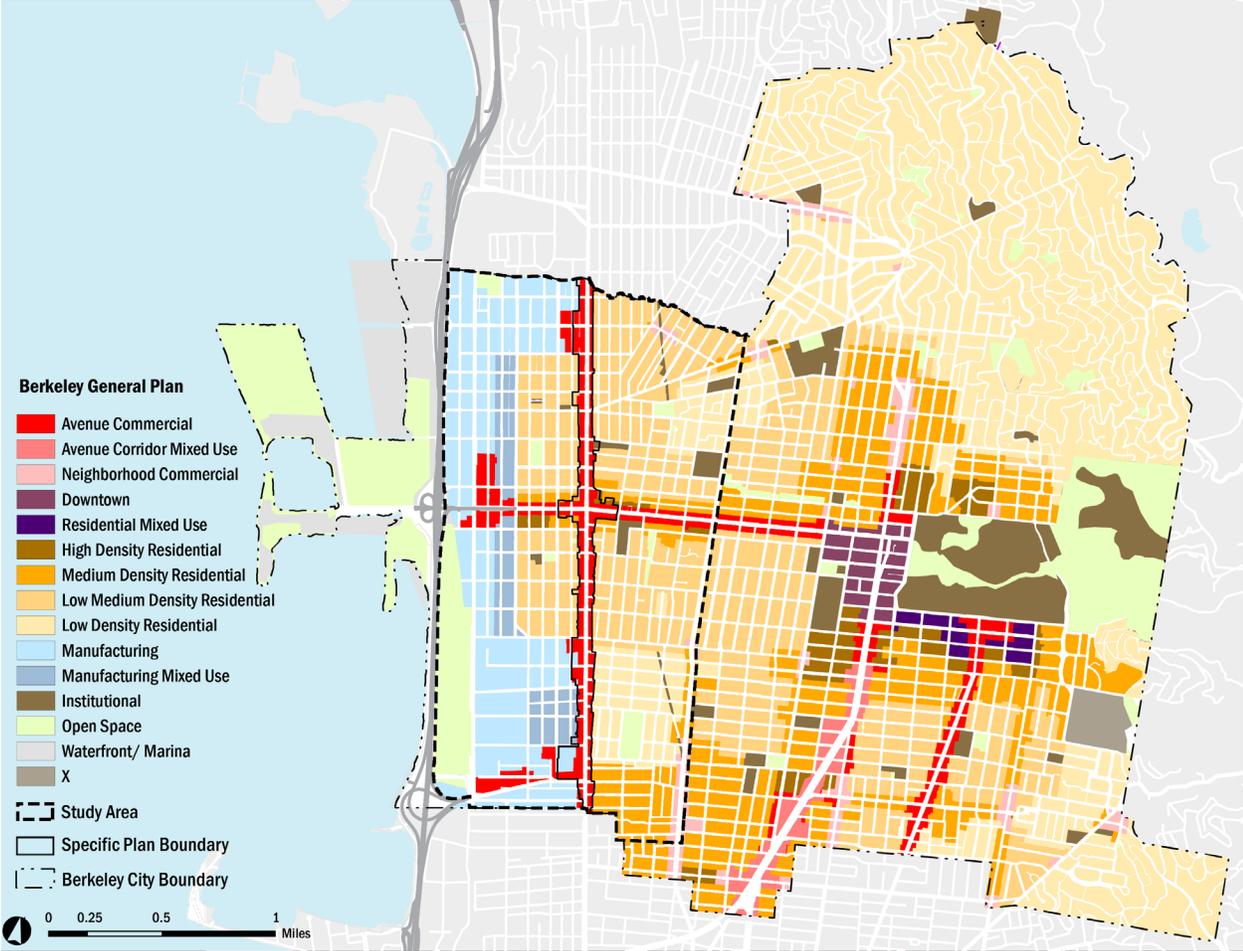


Figure 12. Berkeley General Plan. Source: City of Berkeley, 2023.

### 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.<sup>28</sup>
- **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

---

<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup>

- **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.

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

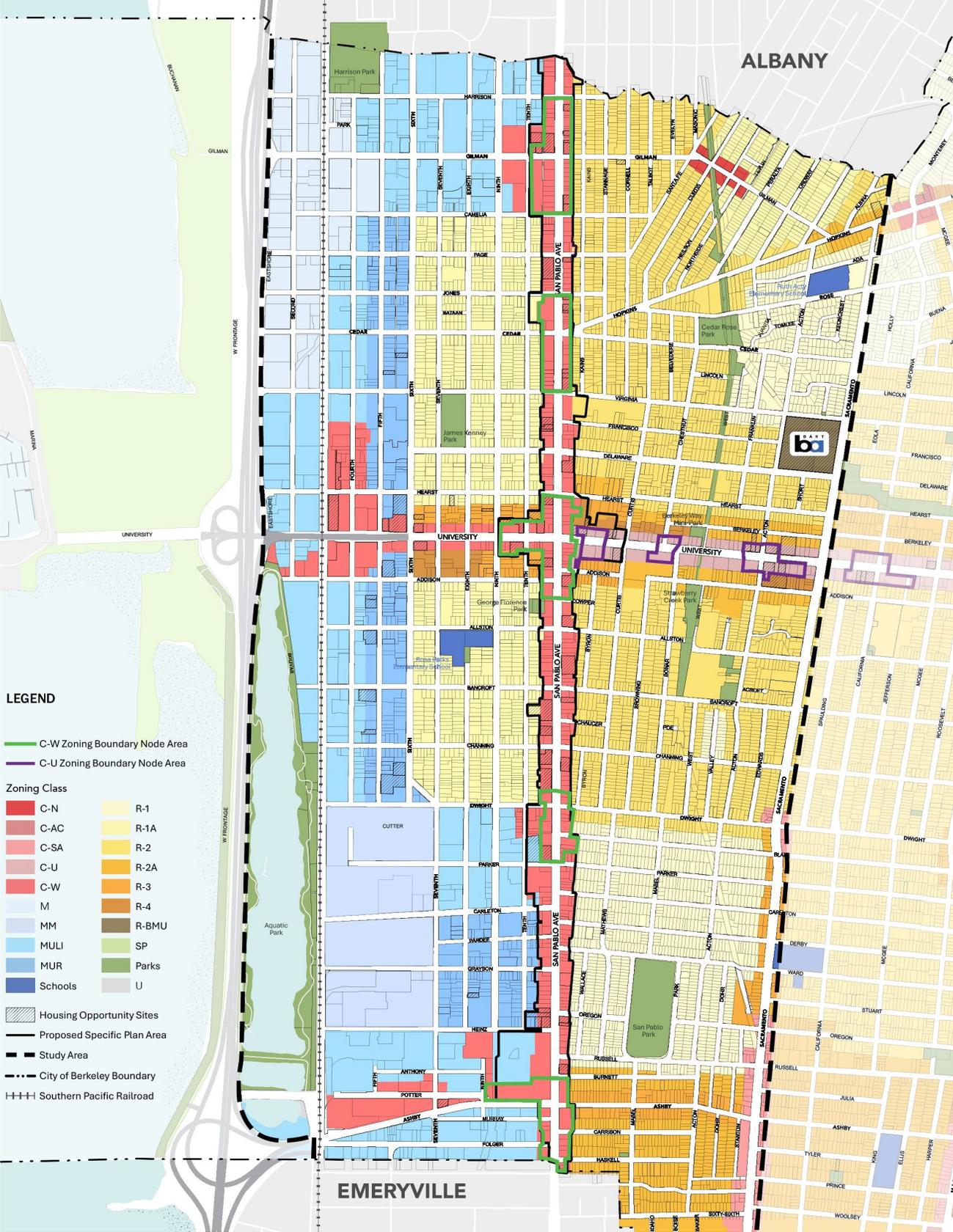


Figure 13. Zoning Map with designated nodes in the Specific Plan and Study Areas. Source: City of Berkeley

## 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.<sup>30</sup> 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 Type<sup>31</sup> (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 <sup>1</sup>	UP	NP	UP <sup>2</sup>
Multi-family	NP	NP	UP	UP	UP	UP	UP <sup>1</sup>	UP	NP	AUP/UP <sup>2,3</sup>
Mixed-Use Projects	NP	NP	UP	UP	UP	UP	UP <sup>1</sup>	ZC/AUP/UP <sup>4</sup>	NP	AUP/UP <sup>2,3</sup>
Live-work							ZC	AUP/UP <sup>5</sup>	AUP/UP <sup>6</sup>	AUP/UP <sup>6</sup>
Group Living Accommodation	NP	NP	NP	NP	UP	UP	UP <sup>1</sup>	UP	NP	UP <sup>2</sup>

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

<sup>30</sup> City of Berkeley, 2023. Municipal Code section 23.502.020 Defined Terms.

<sup>31</sup> City of Berkeley, 2023. 2023-2031 Housing Element Update, pg. 81-82.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Permit required dependent on project size and other factors. See BMC Section 23.204.140.B.2.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

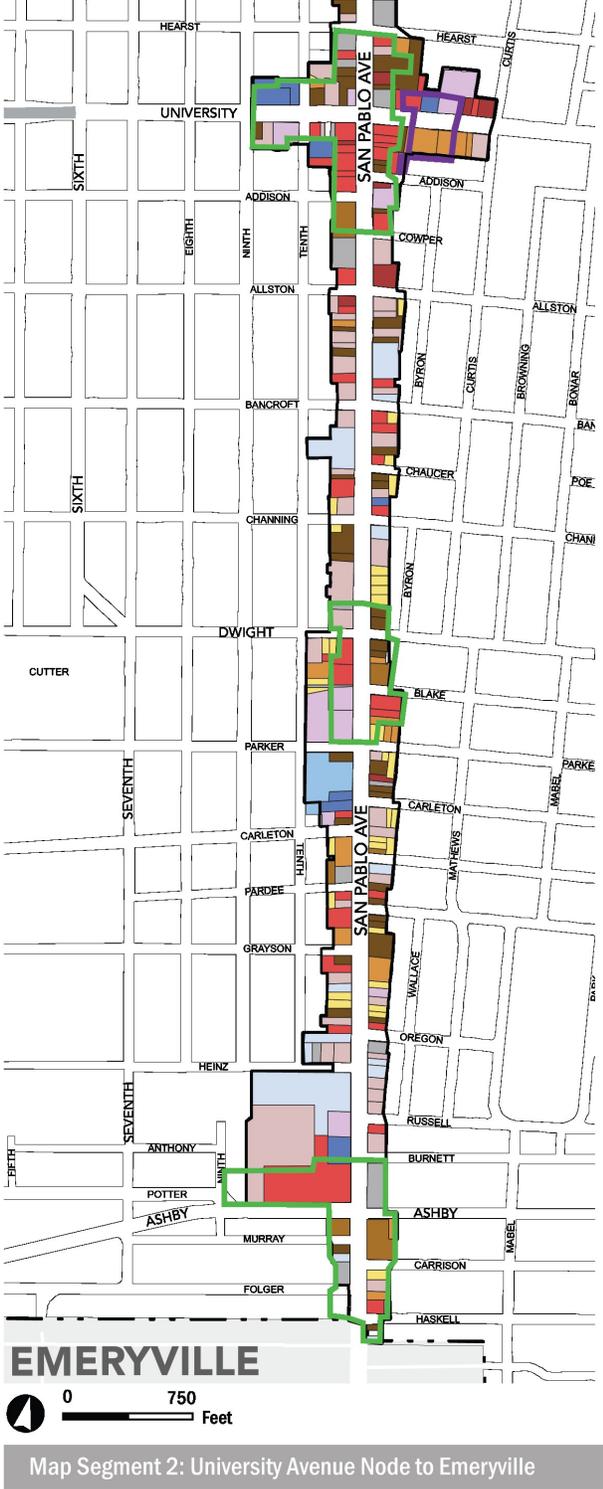


*Looking south towards Ashby intersection from in front of the historic Heinz Building.*

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.*



\*Note: Ground Floor Use is based on the Land Use Codes, which have been summarized to reflect main use for the individual parcels. The current ground floor activity on site might differ.

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

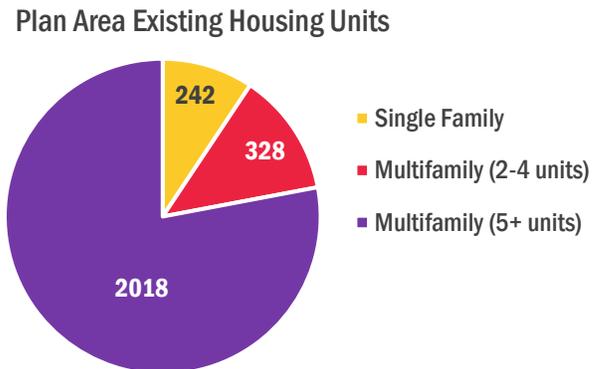


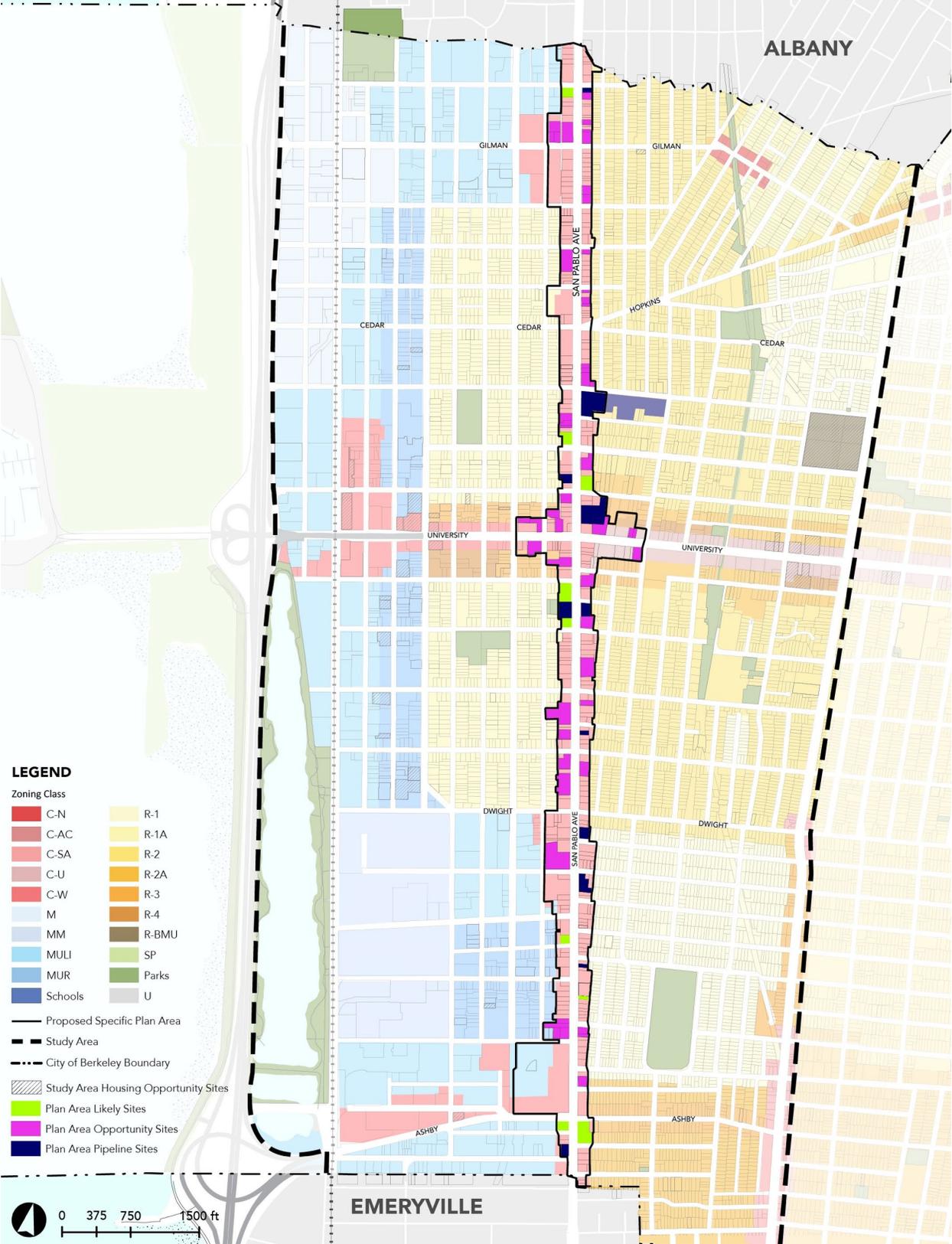
Figure 15. Distribution of Existing Housing Units in the Plan Area by Type. Source: City of Berkeley, 2023.

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", 02.17.236

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.<sup>32</sup>

## 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.<sup>33</sup>
- 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%
<b>Total All Sites</b>	<b>5,349</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>15.4%</b>

Source: City of Berkeley, Annual Progress Reports 2018-2022 and 6<sup>th</sup> 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.

<sup>32</sup> CA Department of Housing and Community Development, 5th Cycle RHNA Progress Report.

<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup>

**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%)<sup>37</sup>



Figure 17. High-profile commercial closures include, from left to right, Ohmega Salvage and Albatross Pub.

<sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> National Federation of Independent Business. Small Business Optimism Index, October 2023.

<sup>36</sup> 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.

<sup>37</sup> 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 Owned<sup>38</sup>, 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.

---

<sup>38</sup> 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.

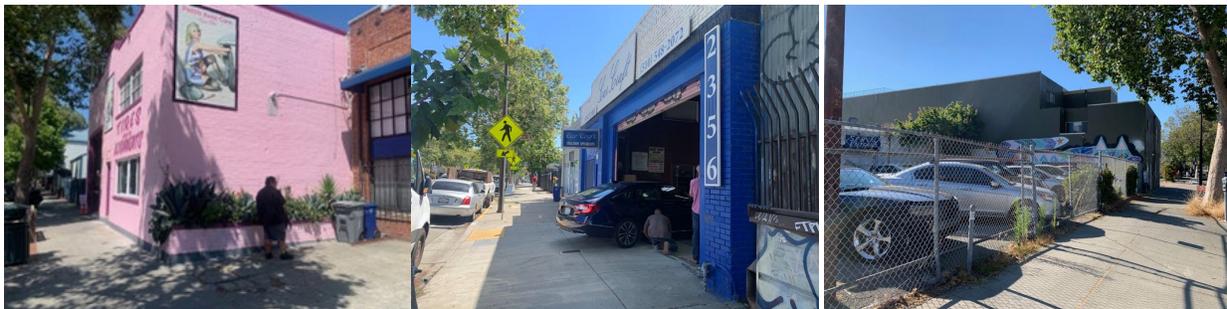


Figure 19. Example auto businesses include, from left to right, Patti's Auto Care, Car Craft Collision Specialists, and Used Car Sales.

**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.

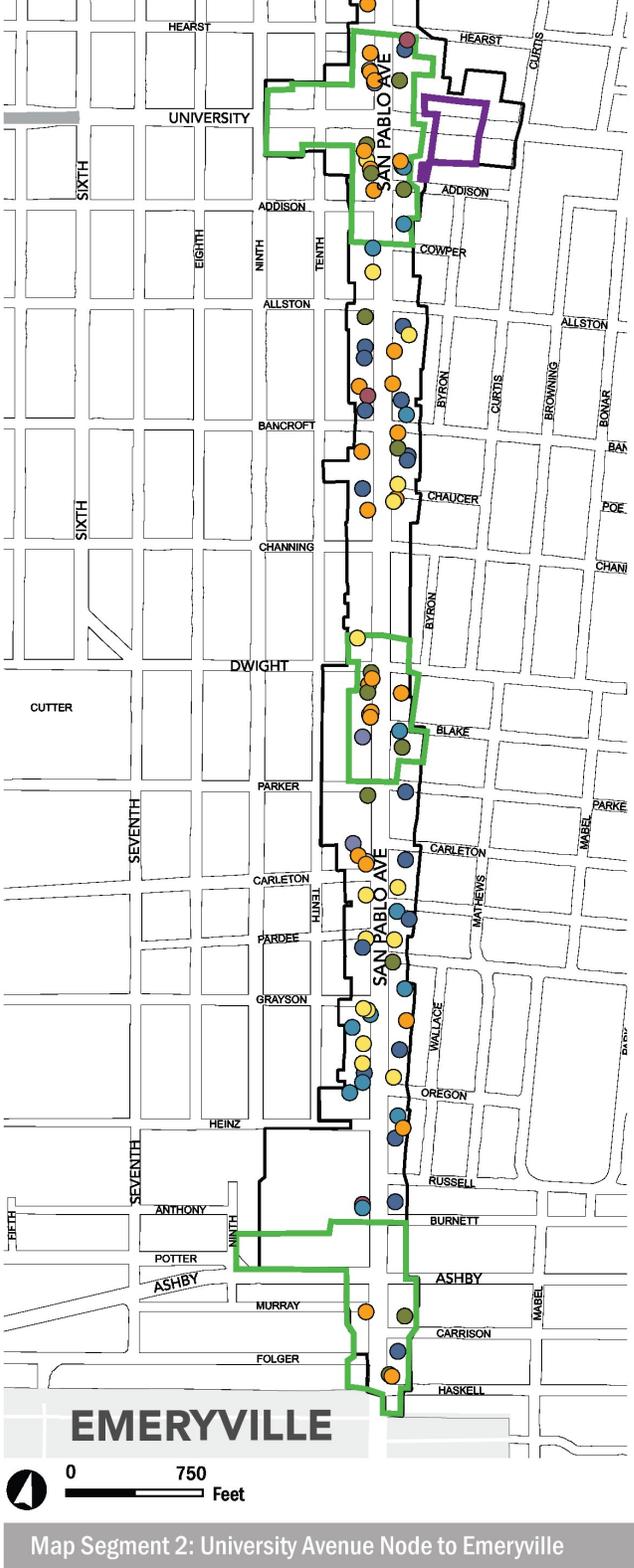
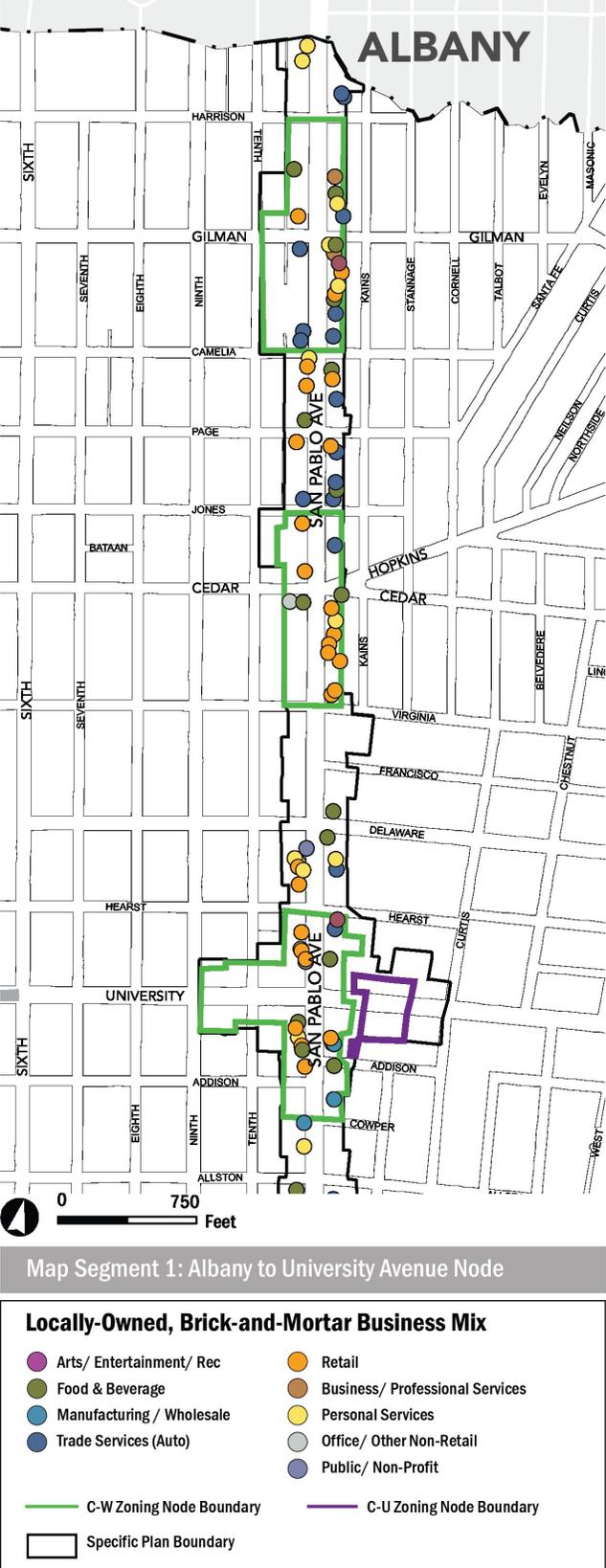


Figure 20. Mix of ground floor locally owned, brick and mortar businesses. Source: Street Level Advisors and Gordon Consulting, 2023.

## 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**.

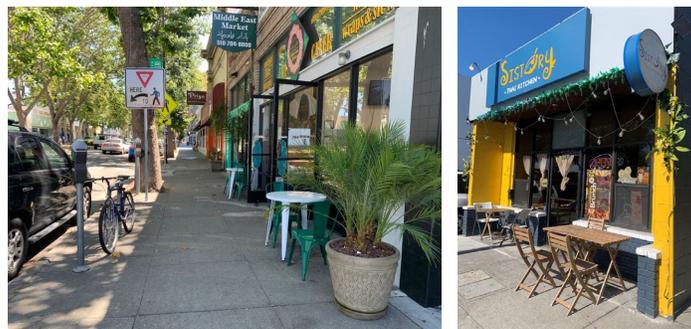


Figure 25. Existing private outdoor “café” seating.

## 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
<b>Frontages that activate the sidewalk</b>	Maintained and landscaped if any	Well maintained brick-and-mortar with pedestrian engaging features, such as storefront windows, murals, etc.	
<b>Inactive Frontages that support some aspects of a comfortable walking environment</b>	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.
<b>Inactive Frontages</b>	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.



**Map Segment 1: Albany to University Avenue Node**

Frontage Activity	Commercial Nodes
Frontages that Activate the Sidewalk and Support a Comfortable Walking Environment	C-W Zoning Boundary
Inactive Frontages that Support Some Aspects of a Comfortable Walking Environment	University Ave Node Area
Inactive Frontages that do not Support a Comfortable Walking Environment	Study Area
	Specific Plan Boundary

**Map Segment 2: University Avenue Node to Emeryville**

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 requirements<sup>39</sup>.

- **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.<sup>40</sup>
- **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.

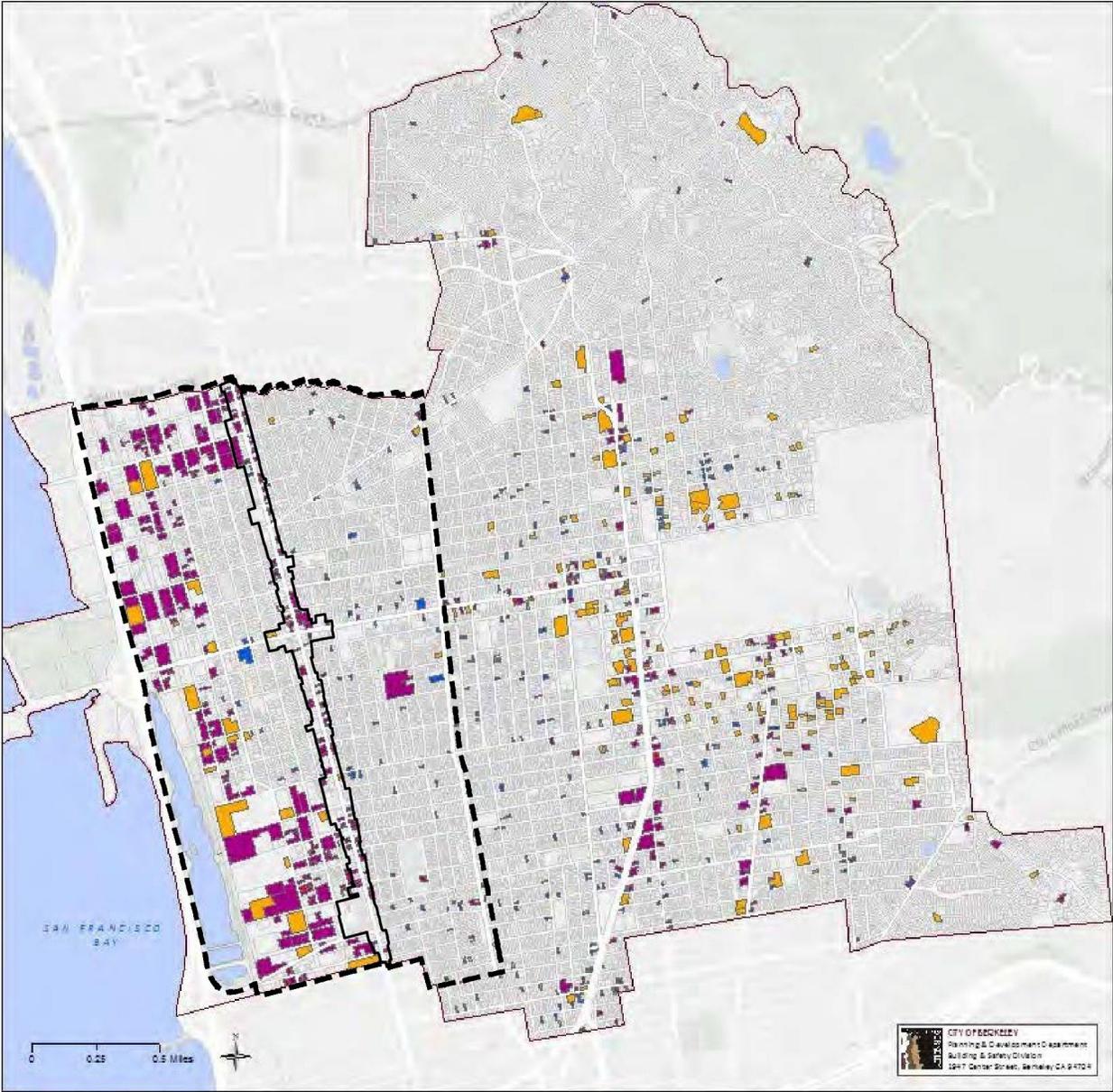
**Climate Action Plan (CAP)** – The plan, adopted in 2009, represents key strategies for achieving a sustainable future in Berkeley. Within transit corridors such as the San Pablo Avenue corridor, the City’s CAP advocates for smart growth and increased ‘walkability’, ‘bikeability’, and public transit 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.

<sup>39</sup> See Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) [Regulations and Guidance](#) for further information.

<sup>40</sup> 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

- POTENTIALLY NON-DUCTILE CONCRETE
- POTENTIALLY TILT-UP OR OTHER RIGID WALL-FLEXIBLE DIAPHRAGM
- POTENTIALLY SOFT STORY AND WOOD FRAMED BUILDINGS
- UNREINFORCED MASONRY
- ▭ Specific Plan Boundary
- ▭ Study Area

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.

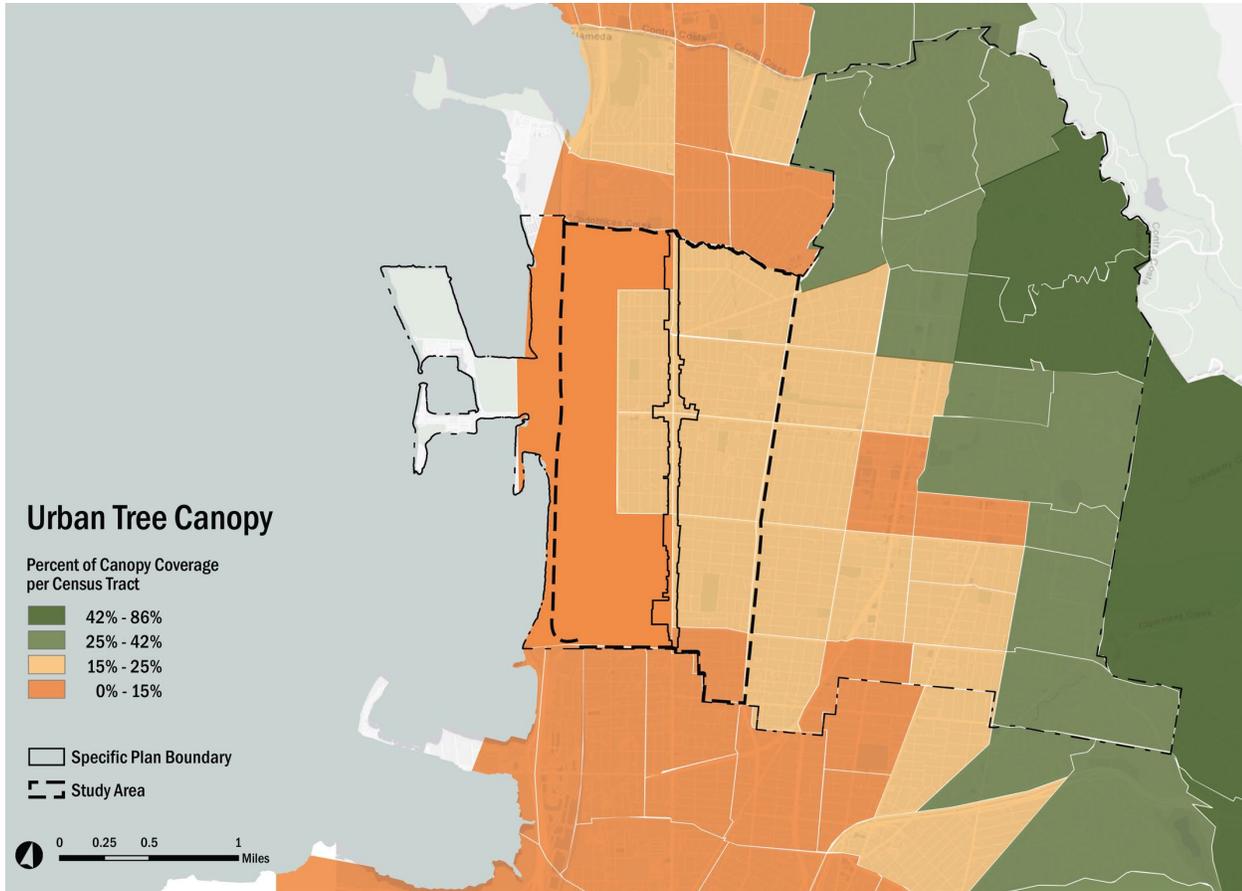


Figure 36. Urban Tree Canopy - percent coverage per Census Tract. Source: EarthDefine, USDA Forest Service, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, 2018.

## 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. <sup>41</sup>

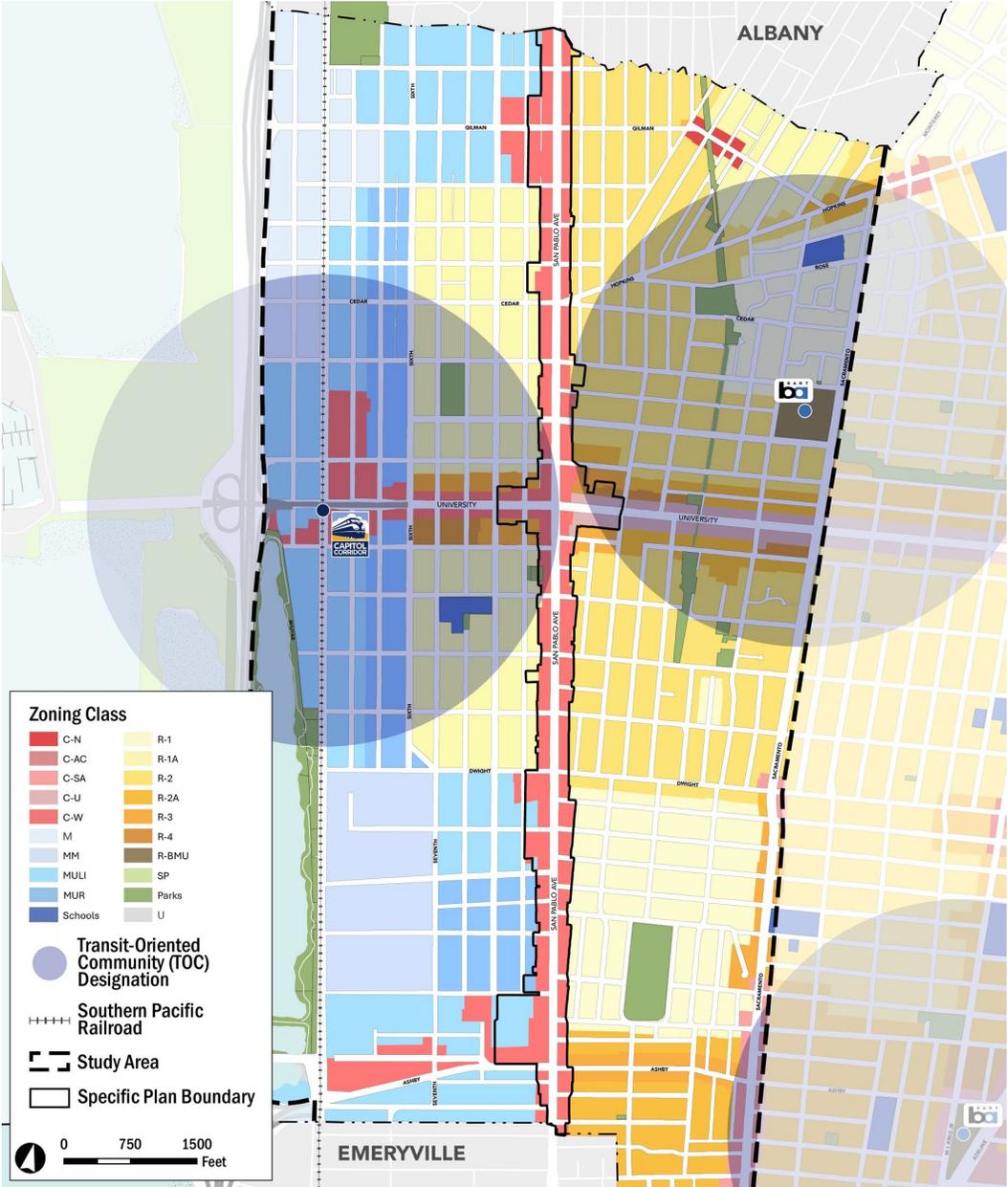


Figure 37. Transit Oriented Community (TOC) Designation. Source: City of Berkeley, MTC, 2023.

<sup>41</sup> 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 <sup>3</sup>						Maximum Lot Coverage			Usable Open Space Per Unit (sq. ft.)	Density Assumption for Housing Element Update (du/acre) <sup>7</sup>
			Avg. Height	Max. Height (height overlay)	Stories (#)	Story	Front	Rear	Side	Street Side	Building Separation	Main Building Height (stories)	Interior and Through Lots (%)	Corner Lots (%)		
R-1 Single Family	5,000	—	28' <sup>1</sup>	35'	3	All	20'	20'	4'	4'	—	1 to 3	40	40	400	6
R-1A Limited Two Family	5,000	—	28' <sup>1</sup>	35'	3	1	20'	20'	4'	4'	8' <sup>6</sup>	1	40	45	400	15
						2	20'	20'	4'	4'	12' <sup>6</sup>	2	40	45		
						3	20'	20'	4'	4'	16' <sup>6</sup>	3	40	45		
R-2 Restricted Two Family	5,000	2,500	28' <sup>1</sup>	35' <sup>2</sup>	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' <sup>1</sup>	35' <sup>2</sup>	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	— <sup>3</sup>	35'	35' <sup>10</sup>	3	1	15'	15'	4'	6'	8'	1	45	50	200 <sup>5</sup>	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	— <sup>3</sup>	35' <sup>8</sup>	35' <sup>9</sup>	3 <sup>4</sup>	1	15'	15'	4'	6'	8'	1	45	50	200 <sup>5</sup>	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		

<sup>1</sup> Up to 35' allowed with an AUP.

<sup>2</sup> May exceed with an AUP.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 200 sq. ft. for each dwelling unit, 90 sq. ft. for each person in a Group Accommodation Room.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> Up to 35' allowed with an AUP, 65' and six stories allowed with Use Permit.

<sup>10</sup> 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 <sup>3</sup>		Main Building Separation	Min. Lot Area (SF)	Density (DU/acre)	Density Assumption for Housing Element Update (du/acre) <sup>7</sup>
C-U University Avenue	2.2-3.0/None	36-48' <sup>1</sup> /36'	3-4 <sup>1</sup>	200	100%/40-50%	Res/Non-Res. Uses	<p><b>Front/street (non-res. fronting on University Avenue):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avg 2'</li> <li>• 2' at all sidewalk pedestrian entries.</li> </ul> <p><b>Front/street (res. fronting on University Avenue):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avg 2'</li> <li>• Max 10'<sup>5</sup></li> </ul> <p><b>Front/street (not fronting University Avenue and confronting a non-res. district):</b> No minimum.</p> <p><b>Rear (south side of University Avenue; abutting res. district):</b> Min 10' or 10% of lot depth, whichever is greater, and average of 20'<sup>6</sup></p> <p><b>Rear (south side of University Avenue not abutting res. district):</b> No minimum.</p> <p><b>Rear (north side of University Avenue):</b> 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).</p> <p><b>Interior side:</b> No Minimum</p> <p><b>Street side:</b> 2' average</p>	Res. only projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> story: 8'</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> story: 12'</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> story: 16'</li> </ul>	None/5,000 <sup>2</sup>	None	150
						Res. Only Uses <sup>8</sup>	<p><b>Front<sup>9</sup>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avg 2'</li> <li>• Max 10'</li> </ul> <p><b>Rear:</b> 15'</p> <p><b>Interior:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> story: 4'</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> story: 4'</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> story: 6'</li> </ul> <p><b>Street side:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> story: 6'</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> story: 8'</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> story: 10'</li> </ul>				
C-W West Berkeley	3.0	40-50'	3-4 <sup>4</sup>	40	100%	None <sup>3</sup>		None	None	150	

<sup>1</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and above residential only.

<sup>2</sup> Standards included are for residential or mixed use. Standards differ slightly for live/work project.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 50 ft. and 4 stories allowed for mixed-use projects. The 4th floor must be residential or live/work.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> See 23.304.030(C)(2)(b) (Modifications in Commercial Districts) for allowed reductions.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> May be modified with a UP(PH).

<sup>9</sup> 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) <sup>7</sup>
						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 <sup>8</sup>	New Lot	No Minimum	40'	Live/work	28' and 3 stories <sup>3</sup>	5'	No Minimum <sup>5</sup>	No Minimum	5'	No Minimum	100%	1.0/1.5 <sup>6</sup>	Per Dwelling Unit	150	24.5
				Residential or mixed-use <sup>2</sup>	35' and 3 stories								Per Live/Work Unit	40	
	Per Dwelling Unit or Live/Work Unit	1,250 <sup>1</sup>		All other uses	35' and 2 stories <sup>4</sup>										

<sup>1</sup> One additional dwelling unit allowed for remaining lot areas between 750 and 1,250 square feet.

<sup>2</sup> Mixed use is defined here as a building with 50 percent or more of gross floor area used for residential (including live/work) purposes.

<sup>3</sup> Maximum 35 ft. with a Use Permit.

<sup>4</sup> Maximum 3 stories for arts/craft studios and light manufacturing (with no other non-residential uses) on a block without dwelling units.

<sup>5</sup> Minimum 5 ft. if rear of lot abuts a street.

<sup>6</sup> Maximum 1.5 for buildings with 50 percent or more residential or live/work floor area.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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 <sup>2</sup>	Minimum Street Frontage <sup>3</sup>	Minimum Area for Retail Sales, Personal and Household Services, or Food Service <sup>4</sup>	Maximum Area for Office Use <sup>4</sup>
C-W	See Table 23.204-1. <sup>1</sup>	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%

<sup>1</sup> Mixed-use projects in C-W are subject to permit requirements in Table 23.204-41.

<sup>2</sup> Calculated as percent of project land area.

<sup>3</sup> Calculated as percent of project's University Avenue frontage.

<sup>4</sup> 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**

				Affordability												Total		
	City (sites)	SPA SP		Extremely Low / Very Low			Low			Moderate			Above Moderate			City (units)	SPA SP	
		(sites)	(sites)	(% of City)	City (units)	SPA SP (units)	SPA SP (% of City)	City (units)	SPA SP (units)	SPA SP (% of City)	City (units)	SPA SP (units)	SPA SP (% of City)	City (units)	SPA SP (units)		SPA SP (% of City)	
<b>Pipeline Sites - Applications Under Review or Anticipated</b>	69	15	22%	437	134	31%	142	54	38%	41	30	73%	3,991	921	23%	4,611	1,139	25%
<b>Likely Sites - Entitled Projects since 2018</b>	48	9	19%	133	34	26%	166	0	0%	9	0	0%	1,793	486	27%	2,101	520	25%
<b>Opportunity Sites: Underutilized</b>	158	46	29%	1,571	560	36%	1,557	555	36%	1,831	473	26%	1,205	337	28%	6,164	1,925	31%
<b>Opportunity Sites: Vacant</b>	101	5	5%	37	0	0%	36	0	0%	36	36	100%	216	62	29%	325	98	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>2,178</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>1,901</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>1,917</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>7,205</b>	<b>1,806</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>13,201</b>	<b>3,682</b>	<b>28%</b>

Source: City of Berkeley, 2023. 2023-2031 Housing Element Update. Tables C-3, C-6, and C-10.