



# San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

# Community Assessment

# Report

August 20, 2024



City of Berkeley

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

This Community Assessment Report (the Report) provides an overview of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan’s planning process to date and the findings associated with the existing conditions analysis and community input.

The Report includes:

- 1. Existing Conditions Summary Findings:** An overview of key demographics, land use, housing, transportation and economic findings. This summary is intended to help provide an understanding of the context in which the community operates.
- 2. Community Engagement Summary:** A description of the engagement approach which includes a summary of the input received from community members, stakeholders, and other interested parties. This input is provided alongside the relevant existing condition findings and lists community concerns, priorities and aspirations.
- 3. Key issues and Themes:** This section details key takeaways from findings from the community assessment and engagement efforts. The key issues and themes will inform the Specific Plan’s policies and implementation strategies to ensure future development and public investment are aligned with the community’s vision, needs, and priorities.

## Specific Plan Overview

San Pablo Avenue is one of the primary multi-jurisdictional transportation corridors in the East Bay, extending as a major boulevard from the Carquinez Bridge to Downtown Oakland, through the cities of Hercules, Pinole, San Pablo, Richmond, El Cerrito, Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville and Oakland. The character and intensity of San Pablo Avenue varies between towns; however, its connectivity and diversity of uses establishes it as a potential multi-model mixed-use corridor in the East Bay. For that reason, San Pablo Avenue has been the subject of multiple regional planning efforts – such as the Association of Bay Area’s (ABAG) East Bay Corridor Initiative and the Alameda County Transit Commission’s (ACTC) San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project. Berkeley has taken part in these efforts and has also followed the development and adoption of Specific Plans in neighboring jurisdictions with great interest.

San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley has undergone much change – ranging from pedestrian safety improvements to new mixed-use housing developments to new commercial ventures. Strong market demand for housing has led to new development throughout the city, including along San Pablo Avenue, and contributed to State and Regional policies and programs that require and support the city’s facilitation of housing production. Berkeley recognizes that

without a vision and plan, housing projects will not contribute to a cohesive community, public investments may not effectively support changing needs along San Pablo Avenue, nor will there be coordination to meet community and regional goals. In 2015 the City Council recognized these missed opportunities and requested development of a San Pablo Avenue Plan, a comprehensive planning process that will guide future development on this important corridor.

The City initiated the planning process in 2023 to prepare a Specific Plan to articulate the community’s vision for the future of San Pablo Avenue. The vision will identify improvements and create a framework for creating a multi-modal corridor that provides diverse opportunities for living, working, shopping, and taking part in community life along San Pablo Avenue. The Specific Plan will establish community-based and context-sensitive policies, programs, standards, and implementation actions to realize the community’s vision.

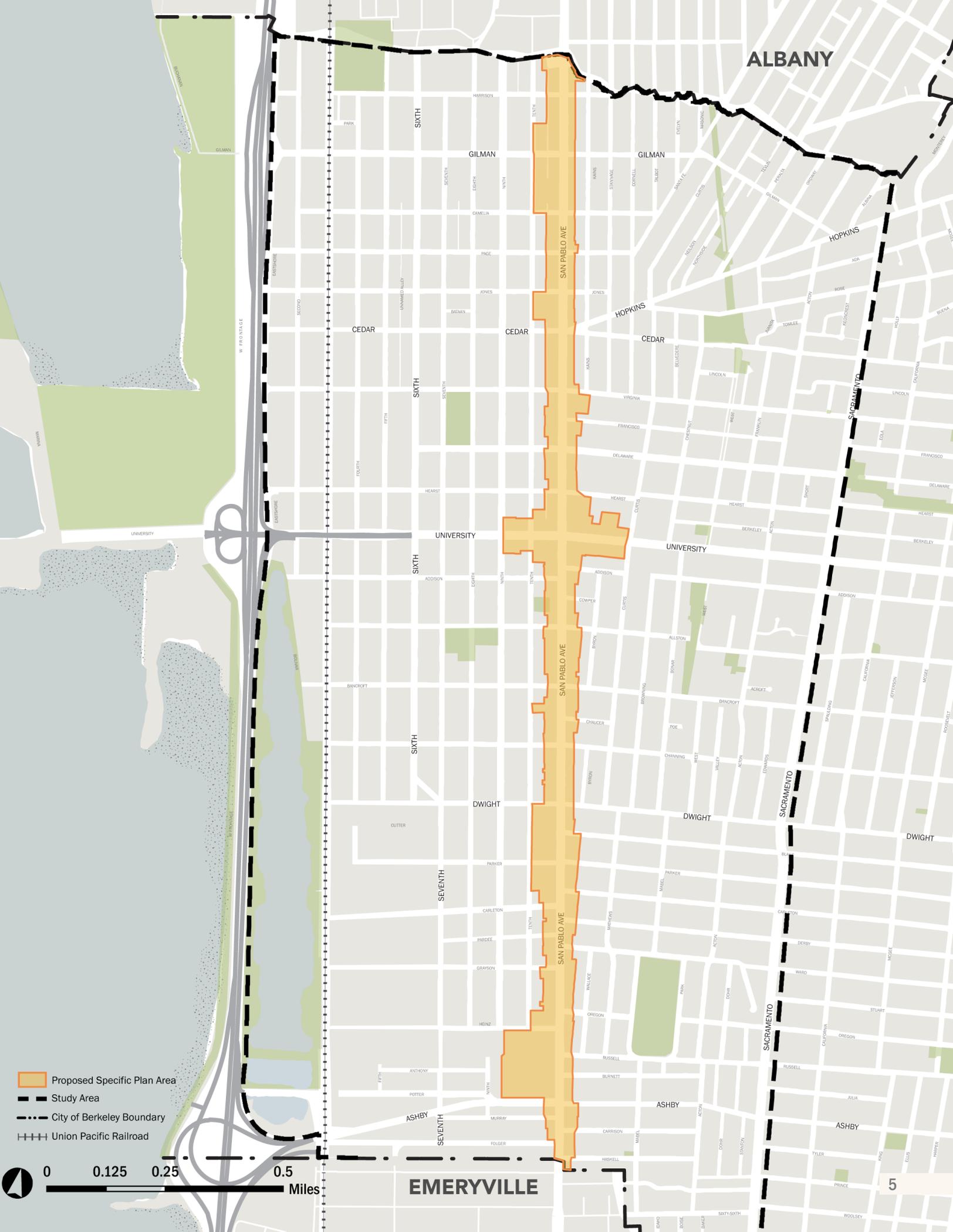
The Plan and Study Area boundaries are described below along with an overview of the Specific Plan planning process.

*Graphic to the right:  
Figure 1. Specific Plan Boundary Map*

### Specific Plan Boundaries

**The Specific Plan Boundary (Specific Plan Area)** encompasses the 2.35-mile corridor along San Pablo Avenue, from the Berkeley/Oakland border in the south, to the Berkeley/Albany border in the north. The Specific Plan Area includes parcels fronting on and adjacent to San Pablo Avenue. Additionally, it covers parcels along University Avenue between Ninth Street and Curtis Street and about 100 ft along some side streets as shown in 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 as shown in Figure 1. The Study Area is included in select analyses throughout the Specific Plan process to gain an understanding of the social and economic relationships between San Pablo Avenue and surrounding neighborhoods and districts.



ALBANY

EMERYVILLE

- Proposed Specific Plan Area
- Study Area
- City of Berkeley Boundary
- Union Pacific Railroad

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles

## Plan Process

The Specific Plan planning process includes three primary phases:

- Existing Conditions & Community Assessment
- Policy Development Recommendations
- Specific Plan Preparation

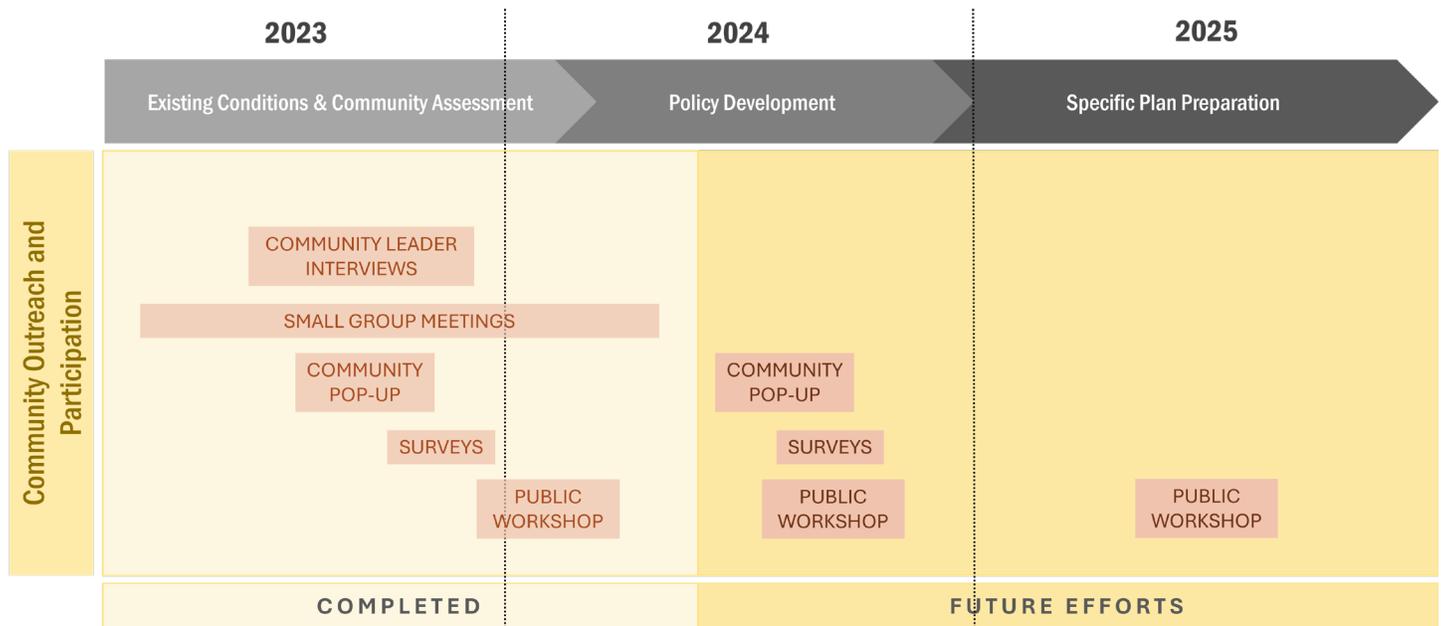
Community outreach and participation efforts occur throughout the entire planning process to ensure community input is received early, and informs key decision points in the process.

This Report is the culmination of the Existing Conditions and Community Assessment work including:

- **Summary of Existing Conditions, Plans and Programs** included an assessment of existing conditions and planning policies and programs relevant to the Specific Plan Area. This work was completed Fall 2023 and is included in Appendix A.
- **Key Community Assets and Issues** included a comprehensive analysis of the community outreach and engagement events (13 events) held between August 2023 and May 2024.

The timeline below highlights complete and future community engagement opportunities. The preparation of the draft and final Specific Plan document is anticipated for 2025, with adoption in late 2025.

### San Pablo Specific Plan Timeline



## Methodology

This section outlines the data collection and analyses used for the Existing conditions report and describes the community engagement between August 2023 to June 2024.

### Existing Conditions

The Existing Conditions analyses used quantitative and qualitative data to capture details unique to the Specific Plan and Study Area. Data collection and analysis included review of:

- Berkeley planning documents such as General Plan elements, including the 2021-2031 Housing Element Update, Specific Plans, Area Plans, and the Climate Action Plan.
- The City’s Municipal Code and Zoning Ordinance.
- State Legislation and Regional Policies.
- Past and current planning efforts such as the Alameda CTC San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project, the City’s Vision Zero Action Plan and Program 29 – Middle Housing, and Objective Design Standards.
- Historical zoning documents, related to equity and displacement, including Equity Priority Communities data and reports from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).
- Commercial data and reports including the City of Berkeley’s Office of Economic Development 2016 Economic Development Work Session, and active business license records.
- Past and current demographic and population data from the U.S. Census Bureau

Field study and direct observation of the corridor included two field surveys along the corridor from the Berkeley/Albany border to the Berkeley/Oakland border in both directions. During the field study, the team observed and assessed existing parcels, public realm conditions including building frontages, sidewalk areas, and landscaping. Team members attended community events, such as the SF Bay Brazilian Day and Lavagem Festival for additional observation opportunities. Team members also attended a San Pablo Avenue Bike Tour, led by Berkeley Design Advocates, on September 16, 2023, to view recently constructed, entitled and submitted projects along the corridor.

## Community Engagement

During this initial planning work, over 330 community members were engaged in 13 outreach events and forums, and over 500 comments have been received. **Table 1** below outlines the events conducted between August 2023 and May 2024. During these events, participants and members of the community explored issues related to housing and commercial development, economic markets, including local business and retail activities, placemaking, mobility, and personal safety in the public realm. Through comments, interactive activities, surveys, and stakeholder interviews and small group meetings, community members provided insight into their varied experiences living, working, and spending time along and surrounding San Pablo Avenue, as well as traveling to and from the corridor. The input collected includes a range of ideas, experiences, and priorities, however, many similar comments and themes appeared consistently throughout all outreach events.

The Specific Plan process has resulted in valuable feedback throughout the community outreach and engagement events. However, this report acknowledges the limitations of the data and participation process. Engagement can often be disproportionate as some members are more able to participate resulting in an unequal representation of the Specific Plan and Study Area community. This report reflects the full range of feedback received throughout all events, and the planning process will continue to identify strategies to reach a representative range of future and existing residents within the whole Specific Plan and Study Area community.

**Table 1: Community Outreach Events**

Event	Summary
Key Community Leader Interviews (5)	August 28-31, 2023. – Virtual on Zoom <u>Format:</u> 5 qualitative interviews held for 60 minutes each <u>Attendees:</u> Community Based Organization Leaders & Small Business Owners
Pop-up at Harvest Festival	October 21, 2023. 11am - 4pm. – Harvest Festival at Cedar Rose Park <u>Format:</u> Pop-up stand with interactive elements to receive community feedback. The stand was staffed with city representatives to answer any questions. <u>Attendees:</u> Visitors of the Harvest Festival, primarily Berkeley residents Received 26 comments and approx. 142 dots on interactive elements
Targeted Intercept Survey	November 2-12, 2023. – In-person along San Pablo Avenue <u>Format:</u> Quantitative survey, designed to be completed in under 10 min <u>Audience:</u> San Pablo Avenue users 222 in-person interviews

Event	Summary
Community Open House (Appendix F)	<p>January 24, 2023. 5:30am - 7:30pm. – Berkeley Adult School multipurpose space</p> <p><u>Format:</u> Introduction presentation, followed by drop-in style open house with 7 stations and interactive elements to receive community feedback. The event was staffed by the project team to answer any questions.</p> <p><u>Attendees:</u> Approximately 80 community members and Berkeley residents with interest on San Pablo Avenue.</p> <p>Received about 270 comments</p>
Public Meeting	<p>December 9, 2023. 10:00am - 12:00pm. – Berkeley Neighborhood Council, Virtual</p> <p><u>Format:</u> Staff gave a brief presentation and answered questions from the Berkeley Neighborhood Council.</p> <p>April 3, 2024. 6:00pm. – Planning Commission, North Berkeley Senior Center</p> <p><u>Format:</u> Public Hearing – Staff gave a brief presentation updating the Commission on the status of the Specific Plan and provided an overview of the Community Open House. Commission asked staff questions and provided comments.</p> <p>May 2, 2024. 7pm - 11pm. – Berkeley Housing Advisory Commission, South Berkeley Senior Center</p> <p><u>Format:</u> Public Hearing – Staff gave a brief presentation updating the Commission on the status of the Specific Plan and provided an overview of the Community Open House. Commission asked staff questions and provided comments.</p>
Small Group Meetings (5)	<p>Residents: October 17, 2023. 5:30pm. – West Berkeley Library</p> <p>Small Businesses: November 8, 2023. – City Hall at 5:30pm.</p> <p>Community Based Organizations (CBOs): November 14, 2023. 12:00pm. – City of Berkeley Offices</p> <p>Architects and Developers: March 19, 2024. 12:00pm. – City of Berkeley Offices</p> <p>Large Employers, Developers, and Land Owners: May 28, 2024. 9:30am. – Virtual on Zoom</p> <p><u>Format:</u> In-person group discussion with intro presentation, with exception of the Major Employers Group Meeting, which was held virtual on zoom</p> <p><u>Attendees:</u> 7 Residents of adjacent neighborhoods; 3 small business owners; 2 CBO representatives of Rebuilding Together and David Bower Center; 10 architects and developers; 5 representatives of major employers and consultants</p>





## Chapter 2

# Existing Conditions + Community Feedback

Chapter 2 of this report provides a summary of the Plan Area’s existing conditions and input received from the community. The existing conditions summary provides a high-level overview of the more detailed Existing Conditions Assessment Report included in Appendix A. The Existing Conditions Assessment was prepared in Fall 2023. The following section highlights analyses related to the Existing Conditions Assessment and integrates pertinent feedback received from community members, stakeholders and other relevant parties.

## Community Demographics

A demographic analysis was conducted for the Study Area to highlight characteristics of the community in the area over time.

### Population

The Study Area's population in 2020 was 26,360. The population grew 16% between 2010 to 2020, representing 22% of the city's total population and outpacing the city's overall population growth of 9% to 122,580 people in the same period.

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

– Community advocate from Beautiful San Pablo Avenue

### Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Growth in racial and ethnic populations has been disproportionate, resulting in an uneven demographic change within the Study Area. From 2000 to 2020, the White population increased by over 3,900 (+45%), while the Black population decreased by over 2,600 (-39%), see Figure 3. The population increase of Hispanic/ Latinx, Asians/ API, and other races during that period was moderate. The Study Area is still diverse with the percentage of the Black population in the Study Area being higher than the percentage citywide, see Figure 4.

The Study Area displays greater diversity overall compared to the city and county, and the percentage of Black population is higher in the Study Area.

The Study Area has a history of land use and economic policy that excluded Black, Asian, and other racial and ethnic groups from other areas of Berkeley. The majority of the Specific Plan and Study Area is a historically redlined area. 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. Those restrictions resulted in Study Area neighborhoods being historically more diverse than the rest of the city.

As a result of being historically under served, the Study area is part of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)'s Equity Priority Communities (EPCs)<sup>1</sup>. The EPC designation helps provide funding and assistance to census tracts that have a significant concentration of under served populations, such as households with low incomes, limited English proficiency, zero-vehicle households, seniors 75 years and over, people with disability, single-parent families, severely rent-burdened households, and people of color.

## Community Feedback: Equity and Diversity

- Several community comments expressed appreciation for the racial and ethnic diversity of San Pablo Avenue and surrounding neighborhoods. Fear that new developments and influx of new residents will increase gentrification and displace marginalized community members was also expressed.
- Overall, many community members support increased housing, specifically affordable housing (rentals), condominiums (owned), and senior housing.



## What was Redlining?

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 was 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 2. 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).based and context-sensitive policies, programs, standards, and implementation actions to realize the community's vision.



Figure 2. Equity Priority Communities and Historical Redlined Areas. Source: Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, Mapping Redlining, 2023. Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), Equity Priority Communities, 2021.

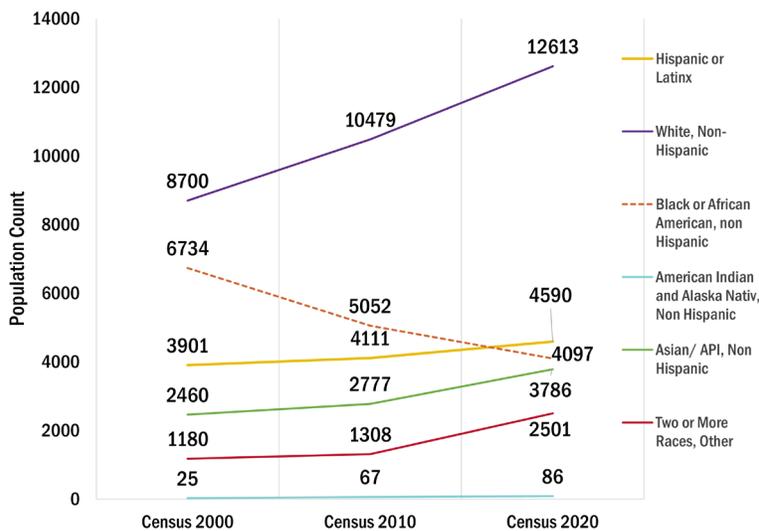


Figure 3. Population Shift by Race and Ethnicity in Study Boundary. Source: United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2010, Table P7. 2020, Table P1

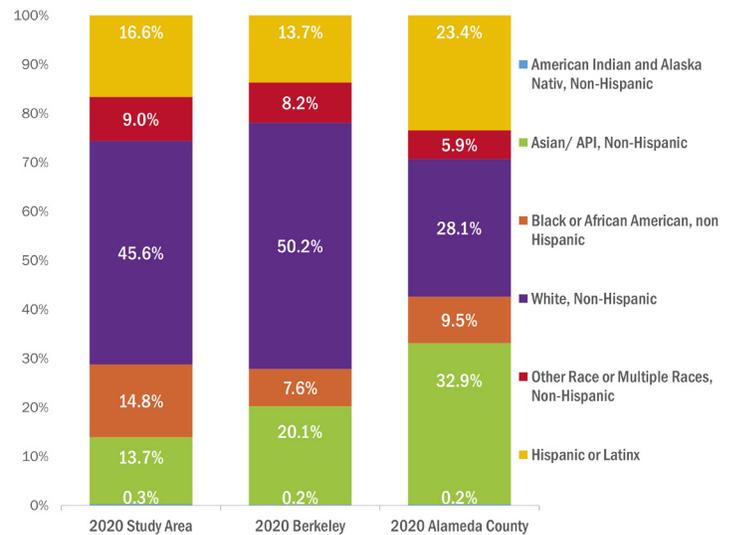


Figure 4. Comparison of Racial Composition. Source: United States Census Bureau. Decennial Census. 2010, Table P7. 2020, Table P1.

<sup>1</sup> To learn more about EPCs, visit: <https://mtc.ca.gov/planning/transportation/access-equity-mobility/equity-priority-communities>. MTC is updating the EPC geography in the region based on the most recent American Community Survey data, and this will change the EPC designations in the Study Area reflecting recent increasing household incomes and shifts in demographics, for more information and to see draft update mapping, visit: <https://mtc.ca.gov/planning/transportation/access-equity-mobility/equity-priority-communities/mtcs-2024-equity-priority-communities-update>.

## Community and Housing

### Housing Characteristics

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. 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.

***“To put in low-income housing and not fully take care of businesses will create resentment among residents and business owners. It will be an uphill battle.”***

***– Interviewed non-profit leader***

### Household Tenure

As of 2020, the Study Area makes up 17% of the city’s households and 22% of the city’s population. Consistent with the city’s household tenure trends, the Study Area has more renter-occupied households than owner-occupied households. The Study Area has a higher proportion of overcrowded housing units compared to the city, with 30% of the city’s overcrowded units. In the Study Area, significantly more renter-occupied households (237) were overcrowded than owner-occupied (82 households).

### Housing Cost

In 2021, the Study Area’s median household income (\$93,871) was approximately \$7,000 below the Berkeley median household income (\$101,048).

In the Study Area, over 50 percent of tenants are cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their gross household income on rent and utilities. Of those tenants, 26 percent are severely cost-burdened, meaning they are spending more than 50 percent of their income on rent and utilities.

Homeowners in the area are spending a lower share of their income on housing costs (mortgages payments, deeds of trust, contracts to purchase, etc.) than renters are, on average.

### Household Eligibility for Affordable Housing

There are 1,513 severely cost-burdened households in the Study Area, and 73 percent (1,118) of these households earn less than \$35,000 and spend more than 50 percent of their income for rent.

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. These households would likely be eligible for affordable housing.

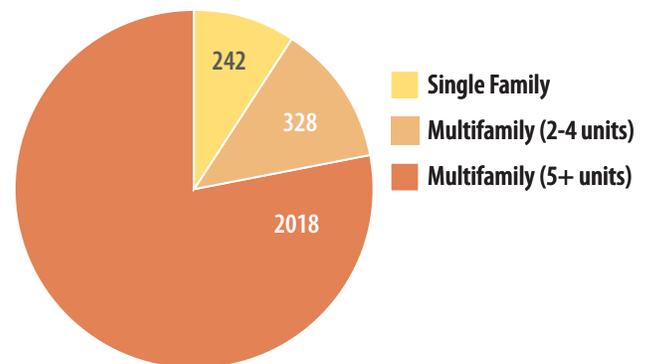


Figure 5. Distribution of Existing Housing Units in the Plan Area by Type. Source: City of Berkeley, 2023.

## Community Feedback: Affordable Housing



### Affordable Housing

- The community supports more housing options, particularly affordable housing, as it received overall support from all outreach efforts.
- Some community members expressed strong support for condominium and other ownership opportunities along the corridor.
- Input from some events demonstrated specific support for senior housing.

### Community Service

- Several community comments noted that an increase in affordable housing units should be met with an increase in supporting services. Suggestions spanned from “daily necessities” like affordable grocery stores to flexible and low-cost space for non-profit organizations.



## Land Use

### Existing Uses

The Specific Plan Area contains a mix of residential and commercial uses (see Figure 8). Residential uses include multifamily, mixed-use, live-work, and a few single-family homes. Live-work spaces are 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. There are a variety of existing commercial uses, however the main uses include services, auto-related uses, restaurant,

and retail uses. Popular commercial uses include auto and home-improvement businesses, including retail, manufacturing, and wholesale uses. Many commercial uses along the corridor are locally owned businesses with brick-and-mortar storefronts. Approximately 90 percent of brick-and-mortar businesses on San Pablo Avenue are locally owned businesses; 21 percent of which are likely owned by women; and 41 percent are likely owned by people of color.

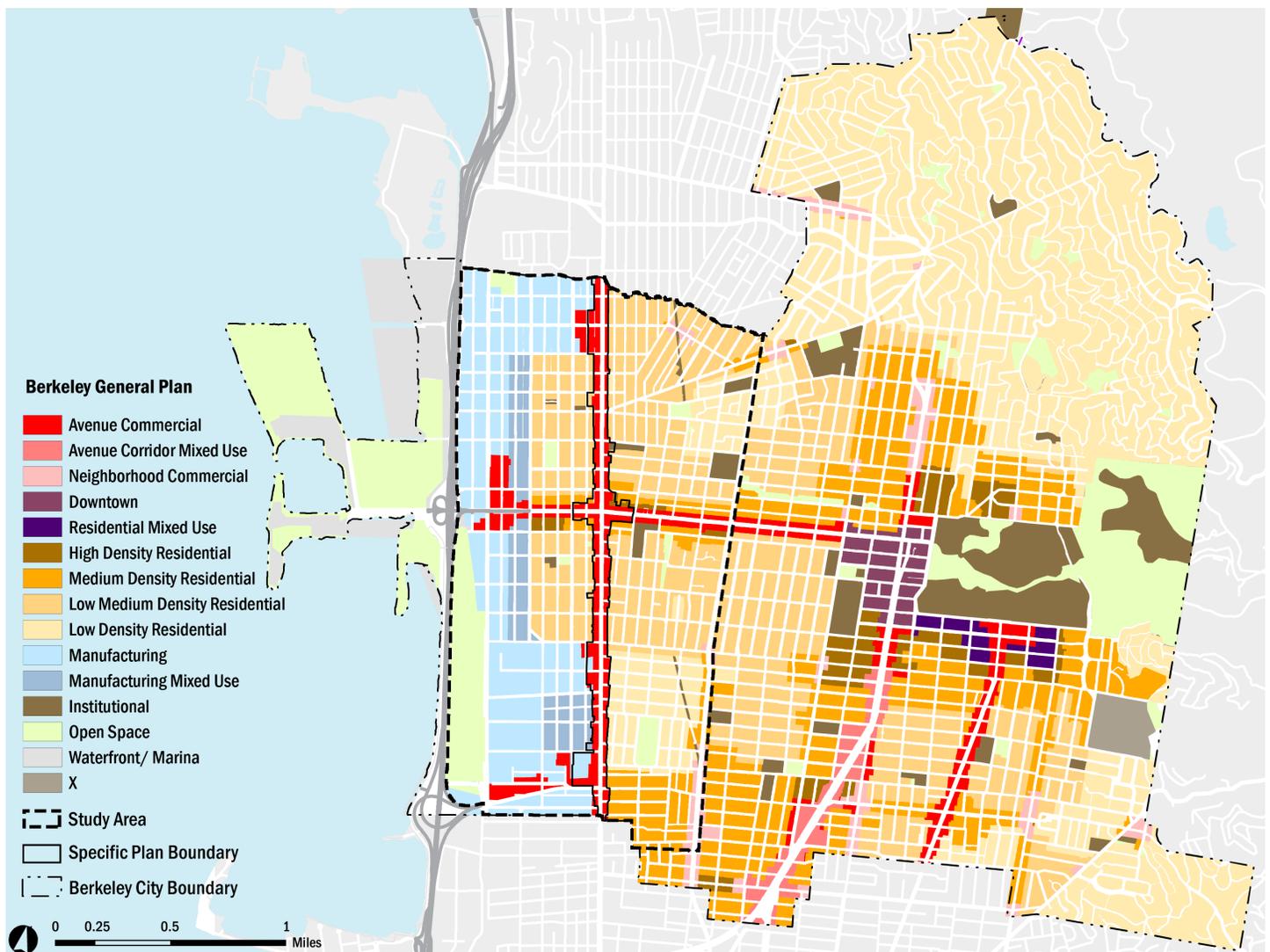


Figure 6. Berkeley General Plan. Source: City of Berkeley, 2023.

## Vacancy Rates

According to the Berkeley Office of Economic Development 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. The latter vacancy rate is 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.

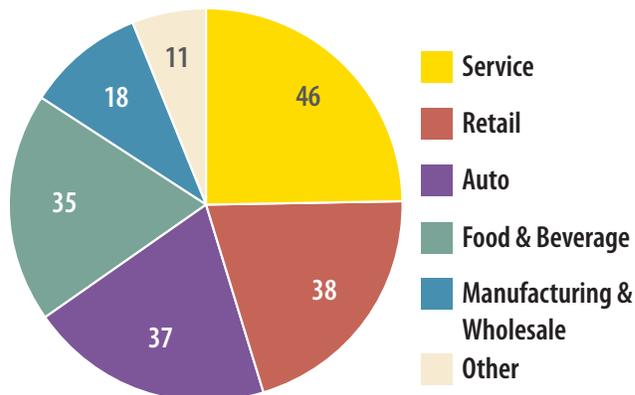


Figure 7. Locally Owned Businesses on San Pablo Ave. Source: Finance Department Active Business License Data & in-person observation (August 2023).

## Community Feedback



### Vacant storefront

Across all outreach events and forums, the community expressed concern about the high number of vacant storefronts along San Pablo Avenue. Reduced activity and vitality along the street and perceived safety were often cited as primary concerns.

### Ground floor use types

Community members expressed support for expanding permitted ground floor uses and advocated for programs and incentives to fill vacant ground floor spaces. Specific ideas included:

- Allowing temporary ground floor uses and other unconventional uses such as art galleries or other pop-ups.
- Allowing a wider variety of uses such as co-working spaces and meeting spaces, galleries and art installations, business incubators, offices, and artist housing.
- Establishing more flexible development standards, reducing discretionary use permits, and other regulatory barriers for small businesses.
- Establishing financial support programs for small businesses for tenant improvements and other startup costs.

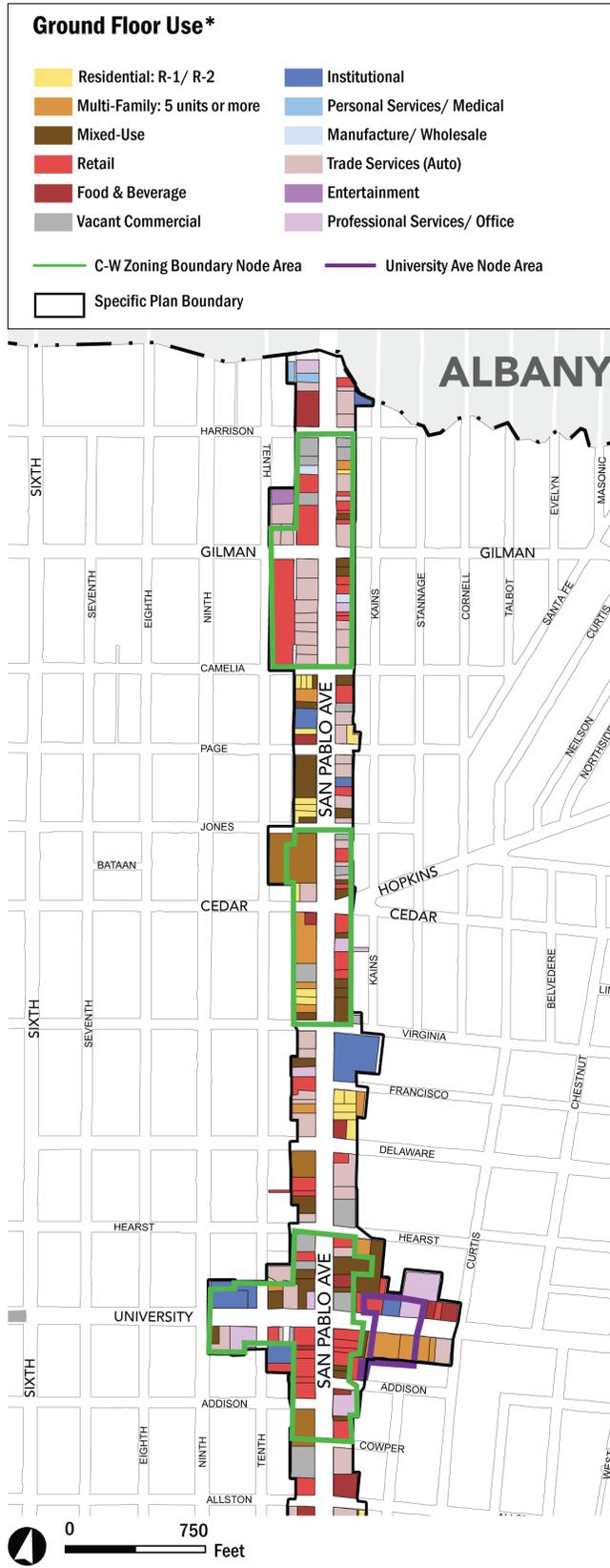
Community members mentioned a variety of desired business types and services including:

- Local-serving businesses to meet every day retail and service needs
- Business with affordable products
- Restaurants, cafes and bars

### Ground floor commercial challenges

Several members of the developer and professional services community that live and work on and around San Pablo Avenue identified the following challenges for ground floor commercial uses:

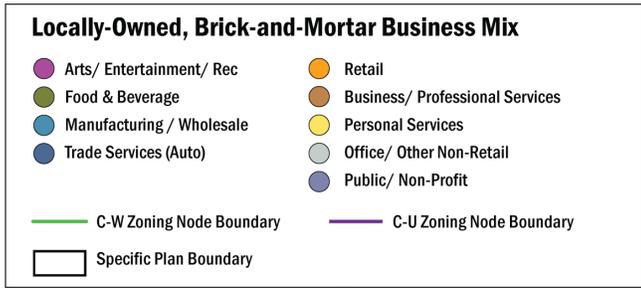
- High Tenant Improvement (TI) costs are prohibitive. Specifically, bathrooms and specialized infrastructure such as grease-traps and exhaust hood ducts are expensive costs for small businesses.
- Retail spaces in new developments are not suitable for small businesses as they are currently designed as wide retail storefronts. Small businesses are looking for small storefronts with deeper floorspace, and back of house access.



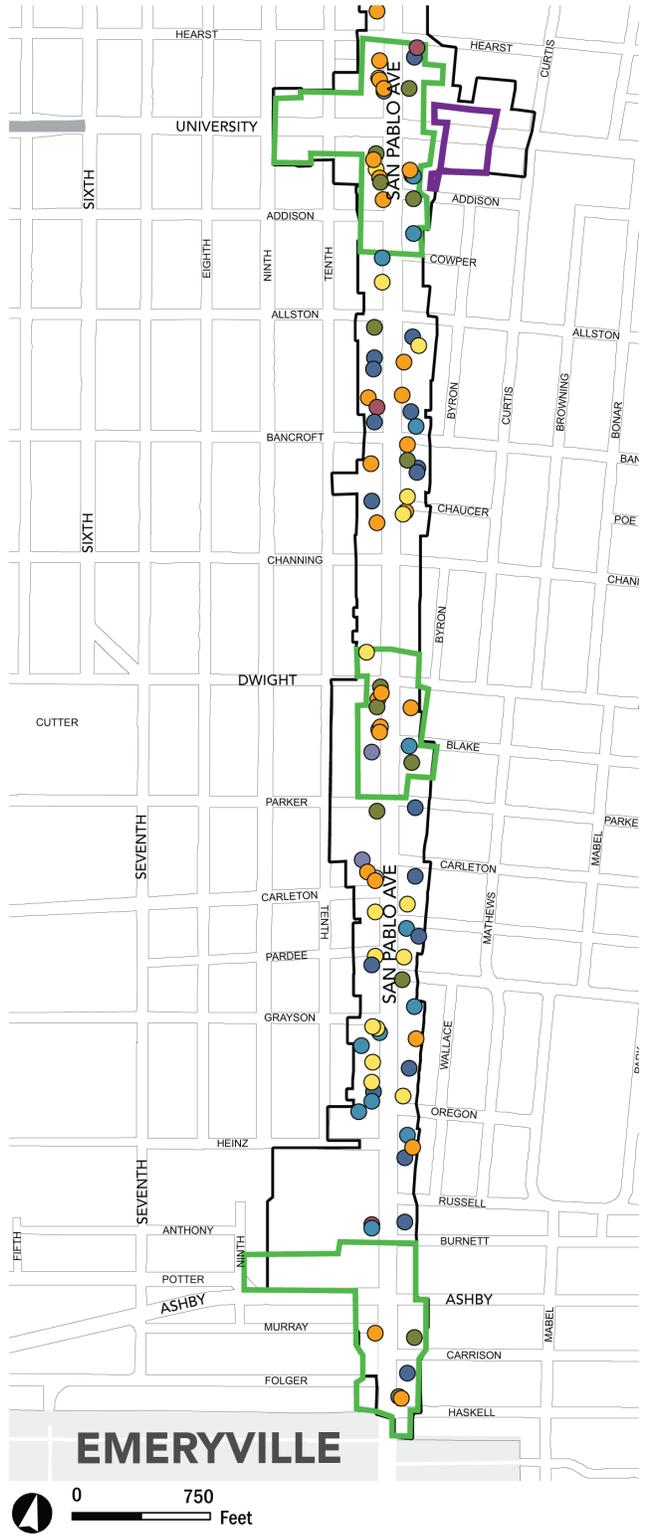
\*Note: Ground Floor Use is based on the Land Use Codes, which have been summarized to reflect main use for the individual parcels. The current ground floor activity on site might differ.



Figure 8. Ground Floor Use based on Land Use Codes. Source: City of Berkeley, 2023. Alameda County Assessor, 2023.



Map Segment 1: Albany to University Avenue Node



Map Segment 2: University Avenue Node to Emeryville

Figure 9. Mix of ground floor locally owned, brick and mortar businesses. Source: Street Level Advisors and Gordon Consulting, 2023.

## Existing Land Use Designations and Designated Nodes

Land uses are regulated by the City’s General Plan and Zoning Ordinance (see Figures 6 and 10). The General Plan land use designation along the entire San Pablo Avenue frontage is **Avenue Commercial**. The Zoning district for properties fronting on San Pablo Avenue is predominantly **West Berkeley Commercial (C-W)**. Some parcels front on San Pablo Avenue have split zoning C-W and another zoning districts including Mixed Use-Light Industrial (MULI), Multi-Family Residential (R-4), and Single-Family Residential (R-1).

The C-W district aims to implement the West Berkeley Plan by providing for diverse commercial services to residents and businesses, including restaurants and both small and large retail formats. It delineates certain areas as nodes to encourage the intensification of commercial activity and prevent overspill into industrial areas while creating a pedestrian oriented environment. The district also aims to promote residential development within commercial zones to support local retail and the use of public transportation. Overall, the district supports development in underutilized commercial areas, while ensuring the developments are compatible with adjacent

commercial, residential, and industrial zones.

The Specific Plan Area includes five of the six Commercial Designated nodes in the **West Berkeley Plan**. The five nodes are located in areas around major intersections along San Pablo Avenue at Gilman Street, Cedar Street, University Avenue, Dwight Way, and Ashby Avenue. Another commercial node is located along Fourth Street. 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. While ground floor commercial is required in the nodes, existing commercial uses are scattered along San Pablo Avenue (see Figure 9).

## Community Feedback

The community expressed a wide range of perspectives regarding the quantity and location of ground floor commercial and retail along San Pablo Avenue:

- Several comments supported continuing to require ground floor retail in the nodes, while others suggested removing the requirement altogether.
- Some community comments questioned the existing node locations and suggested expanded or reduced node sizes.

The community also expressed competing priorities for the nodes:

- Several members of the developer community believe nodes should concentrate high density residential housing.
- San Pablo Avenue visitors and users suggested that nodes should have retail and other commercial uses.
- Some local residents believe nodes should have open space, plazas, and outdoor dining, as opposed to commercial and retail uses.

Other suggestions for the nodes included:

- Prioritizing infrastructure and public realm improvements at the nodes.
- Increasing density and height within the nodes.



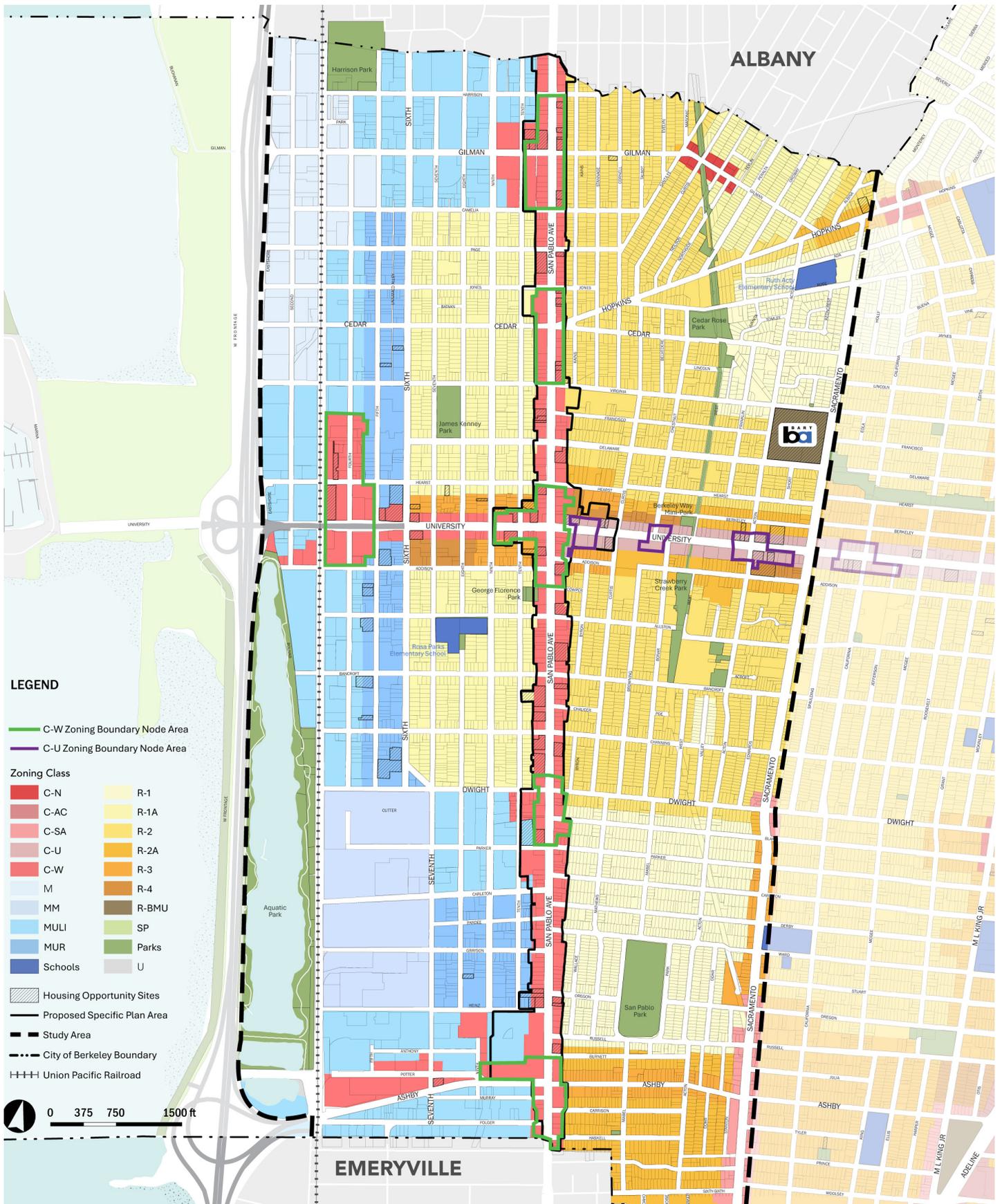


Figure 10. Zoning Map with designated nodes in the Specific Plan and Study Areas. Source: City of Berkeley

## Existing Development Standards and Recent Development Trends

The C-W zoning district permits 3-story (40 feet) residential- and commercial-only developments, and 4-story (50 feet) mixed-use developments with either ground floor commercial or live-work units. State Density Bonus Law (See “State Legislation” section) has resulted in developments ranging from six to eight stories and up to 85 feet in height. A detailed overview of the existing development standards is located in the Existing Conditions Report in Appendix A.

**Table 2: Existing Development Standards**

Designation	FAR (Non-Res/MU)	Height (Non-Res/Res/MU)	Stories (Non-Res/MU)	Density applied in Housing Element (DU/acre)	Recent Proposed and Approved Development along SPA (C-W)
C-W	3.0	40 - 50'  50' for mixed-use Mixed-Use req. in node	3 - 4  4 stories for mixed-use 4story must be res or live-work	150	6-8 story mixed-use developments  3.75-4.70 FAR 150-380 DU/ac
C-U	2.2 - 3.0 or None	36 - 48' /36'  Res only: 36' MU/non-res: 36' MU req. in Node: 48' Non-Res in Node: 40'	3 - 4  MU in Node: 4 stories 3rd floor and above residential only.	150	
General Plan: Avenue Commercial	1.0 to 5.0	Up to 65 ft	Up to 6	150	

## State legislation

Several state laws and regional policies have been approved since the adoption of the City’s General Plan in 2002. The Berkeley Municipal Code continues to be updated to remain consistent with State laws and policies. The following provides an overview of legislation and policy relevant to the Specific Plan. Many recent State 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).

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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 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.

## Potential Housing Production

An estimate of potential housing production within the Specific Plan Area has been prepared using data sources including:

1. Approved projects that have been entitled but not yet issued Certificates of Occupancy
2. Permit Applications for projects that are currently under review by the city
3. 2023-2031 Housing Element Opportunity Sites which identifies an additional 51 sites that could accommodate 2,023 housing units by-right. Density Bonus law could result in approximately additional 700 units.

As of 2022, the approved and anticipated sites along San Pablo Avenue could accommodate over 5,300 units including over 800 deed-restricted affordable units, **see Table 3**. In addition to on-site affordable units, this level of development could generate roughly \$20 million 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.

### 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.

**Table 3: Estimate of Potential Housing Production**

	Total Units	100% Affordable	On site Affordable	% Affordable
Approved (as of 2022)	589	63	52	19.7%
Permit Applications (as of 2022)	2,029	110	192	14.9%
Housing Element Opportunity Sites (Including potential density bonus units)	2,023	110	191	14.9%
Density Bonus <sup>1</sup>	+1,090-2,700	+58-145	+100-255	14.9%
<b>Total All Sites</b>	<b>+5,690-7,400</b>	<b>+340-430</b>	<b>+535-700</b>	<b>15.4%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Estimated based on the typical density bonus achieved from recent projects in Berkeley.  
Source: City of Berkeley, 2023. 2023-2031 Housing Element Update. Tables C-3, C-6, and C-10.



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

– Open House Comments

## Community Feedback



### Housing Density

In all outreach events, participants expressed support for more density and for more housing. The community recognizes that San Pablo Avenue provides opportunities to address regional and local housing issues.

### Housing Height

- The community expressed varied opinions regarding building height for new developments on San Pablo Avenue. Some comments raised concern about shadows on adjacent low-rise neighborhoods, while others supported increasing permitted building height to allow 8 to 12 stories along the corridor to increase housing capacity and economic support for commercial activity.

***“Taller, denser housing urgently needed to house more people.”***

– Open House Comments

- There was support for increased height for residential-only projects along San Pablo Avenue.

### Housing Types and Ownership

- There is support for a greater diversity of housing types. Most community feedback supports a variety of housing typologies (multi-family, townhouse, live-work, etc.).
- The community expressed competing priorities between affordable rental housing options and condominium ownership housing options.

### Building Design

- Some community comments expressed concern over “bulky” and unarticulated buildings.

***“[Make building facades] Architecturally unique. Implement standards that aren’t so strict to allow for variety (i.e. ornamental, setbacks, etc.)”***

– Open House Comments

- Community feedback supports the development of buildings with engaging and active building frontages. The community shared the perspective that ground floor setbacks and other strategies to increase the pedestrian realm along San Pablo Ave will increase pedestrian activity. The additional ground floor setbacks at recent developments along the corridor received positive feedback.

***“New developments [are] nice to live in, but not to live around.”***

– Small Group Meeting comment

### Multi-family Building Amenities and Access

- Some local residents expressed concern about private amenities within new developments resulting in the creation of “urban gated communities”.
- Several community members suggested that new developments provide local public access to some amenities such as gyms, rooftop lounges, etc., to encourage community cohesion.

## Public Realm and Open Spaces

The public realm and open space analysis evaluate the streetscape conditions and its elements, such as sidewalks, landscaping, street furnishings, lighting, and building and site frontages. While the Specific Plan Area does not have any existing public open space or parks, several physical conditions of San Pablo Avenue contribute to a sense of “community life,” including semi-public spaces, community events, and social engagement.



Figure 11. Mature London Plain trees define the character of San Pablo Avenue.

### Streetscape Conditions

#### Landscape

A mature tree-canopy covers the majority of San Pablo Avenue, adding greenery and shade throughout the corridor. However, there are gaps in the tree canopy and maintenance issues with trees and tree wells along the sidewalks. Other public landscaping on San Pablo Avenue is minimal. Some other major streets in the city have business improvement districts that install and maintain landscaping, but there are no existing improvement districts in the Specific Plan Area.

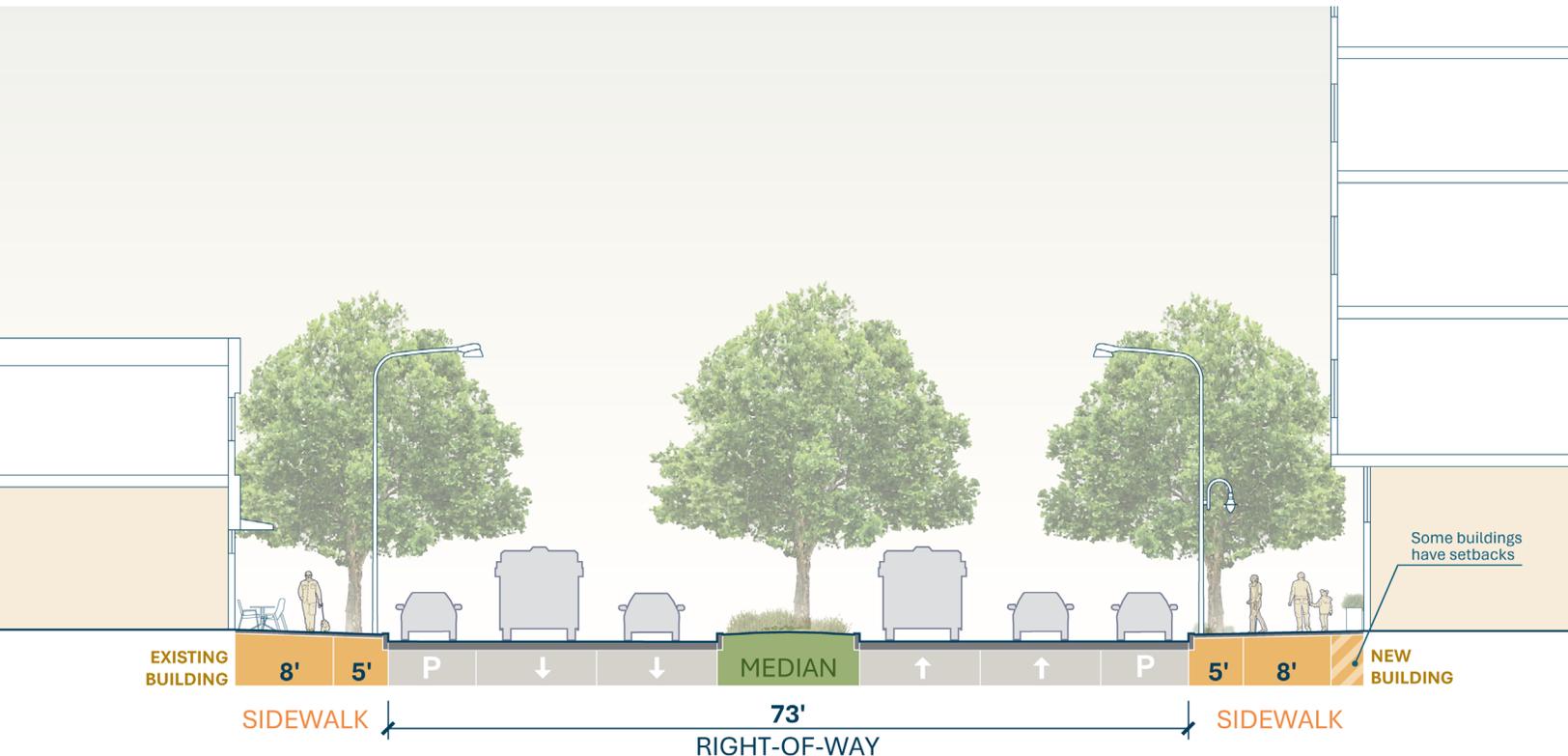


Figure 12. Existing Streetscape Section

## Sidewalk

The sidewalk along San Pablo Avenue is 13-feet wide and in variable conditions along the corridor. In some cases, front yard landscaping and other elements extend into the sidewalk right-of-way. The public-right-way is a State highway and managed by Caltrans, not the city. Figure 13

## Building and Site Frontages

A wide range of built form fronts along San Pablo Avenue including occupied and vacant brick-and-mortar storefronts and new mixed-use developments, residential- and office-only buildings, parking lots and semi-public spaces. Painted murals and storefronts add visual character to buildings without windows. 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 landscape planters at The Jones north of Cedar Street. Others like the Aquatic at Ashby Ave have a small seating area and a bench and rain shelter built into the additional sidewalk level space. See Figure 14.



Figure 13. Existing 13 ft. wide sidewalk.

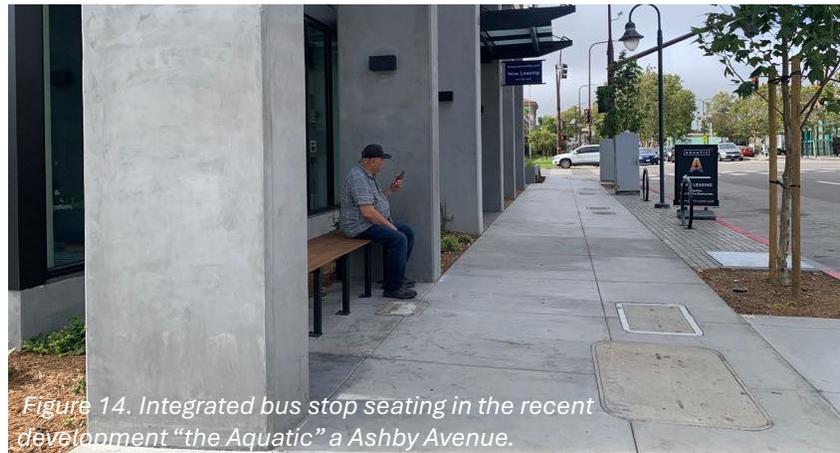


Figure 14. Integrated bus stop seating in the recent development "the Aquatic" at Ashby Avenue.

## Community Feedback: Streetscape

- The community views the street trees and landscaped medians as valued assets that makes San Pablo Ave in Berkeley unique.
- The narrow sidewalk width in combination with poor physical conditions was a frequent issue mentioned by participants in regards to personal safety and comfort as vehicles pass by at higher speeds.
- Narrow sidewalks also limit pedestrian space and opportunities for public interaction and gathering. Overall, community feedback expressed support for wider sidewalks.
- The community expressed the need for better maintenance of the public right-of-way. Participants were frustrated by poorly maintained segments and would like to see repairs and upkeep.
- A common and prevalent comment across all community outreach events was the desire for more pedestrian lighting along San Pablo Avenue. Many community members expressed concerns about personal safety and visibility along the corridor at night. Both pedestrian-scale lighting and lighting from storefront displays were mentioned as possible solutions to improving the sense of safety at night.





Figure 16. Existing roadway and pedestrian lighting.



Figure 17. Existing private outdoor “café” seating.

## Lighting

Existing lighting along San Pablo Avenue primarily includes streetlights. 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 15. 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.

## Street Furnishing

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 16.

## Community Feedback: Community Life

### Art and Cultural Installations

- Community members are interested in improvements in the public realm that include art and cultural installations. They see the potential in practical improvements, such as lighting not only for safety but also for aesthetics and comfort – light strings, artistic lighting, and lighting the trees.
- People were supportive of the potential for physical public art through murals and street furnishings. Also, public art as special events with local artists and performers was mentioned.
- Participants would like to see the ground floor and underused spaces to become community gathering spaces or places of common ground activities, including indoor or outdoor space for community events, food trucks, pop-up retail to support local businesses or art events.



## Personal 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.

## Open Space and “Community Life”

There are no public parks along San Pablo Avenue or within the Specific Plan Area. A number of parks surround San Pablo Avenue including George Florence Park, James Kenney Park, Strawberry Creek Park and San Pablo Park.

Several semi-public and private spaces along San Pablo Avenue such as parking lots, restaurant and café and residential development outdoor spaces provide informal community gathering spaces.



*Figure 18. 1901 San Pablo Avenue houses Brasarte and other Brazilian culturally oriented groups. This shows the 2023 Brazilian Day & Lavagem event on the block of Hearst St just east of San Pablo Avenue.*

There are also existing organizations that provide community gathering venues including Brasarte and Ashkenaz.

San Pablo Avenue, as a State Highway, does not close for street festivals, however the SF Bay Brazilian Day & Lavagem festival took place in the Gilman District, and neighborhood street parties close some streets that cross San Pablo Avenue, see Figure 17.

## Open Space

People have diverse feelings about open space along San Pablo Avenue. For some, concerns about personal safety and lack of maintenance appear to override the potential for community open space on San Pablo Avenue. Others strongly expressed a desire for civic open spaces and community gathering places to bring new and existing residents together. Some suggest that such an environment may support commercial activity.

Several ideas were frequently raised across multiple engagement events including:

- Establishing a parklet program to expand public space.
- Expanding sidewalks and bulb-outs on side streets.
- Temporary or permanent road closures of minor streets intersecting San Pablo.

## Transportation Safety

Concerns about personal safety were prominent, with a majority feeling more unsafe at night and expressing unease while walking along the corridor. Especially on segments with empty property frontages and vacant storefronts, participants experience discomfort as pedestrians.

All outreach efforts resulted in a strong desire for better pedestrian lighting. Participants cited more lighting would improve the safety and walkability during evening and nighttime.

## Transportation, Parking and Utilities

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 is responsible for maintenance of the sidewalks and medians, including street trees and landscaping.

The Specific Plan will not focus on making transportation improvements to San Pablo Avenue, because regional transportation authority, 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 will focus 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.

### Transit Network

#### Local 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 Specific Plan Area. AC Transit is currently evaluating and developing a new network in response to changing travel patterns through the AC Transit Realign Plan. The Realign Plan may alter future AC Transit service in the Specific Plan Area.

In addition to public transit, several privately-operated shuttle services operate in Berkeley. The West Berkeley Shuttle links the Ashby BART station with employment centers in West Berkeley on weekdays. Bear Transit, UC Berkeley's shuttle system, serves Campus Park, Downtown Berkeley, and Berkeley Hills, offering free rides for the university community and \$1 fares for the public. The Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBL) Shuttle provides free service for LBL employees and guests between LBL and North Berkeley BART, with stops along San Pablo Avenue. Upcoming developments like The Berkeley Commons Project and TheLAB will introduce new shuttles between the North Berkeley BART Station and their sites. Though these services cross San Pablo Avenue, they don't directly serve the Specific Plan Area.

#### Regional Transit

BART provides regional commuter rail transit in Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties. BART provides regional commuter rail transit in Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties.

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. The station provides basic amenities, including outside seating and automobile and bicycle parking.

#### Parking

Street parking is available along San Pablo Avenue and on side streets within the Study Area. The majority of parking is paid and timed as part of the GoBerkeley paid parking pricing program. In addition to street parking, many businesses within the Specific Plan Area have small parking lots specific to their business.



## Community Feedback: Transit & Parking

### Transit Service

There are concerns about the possibility of reduced transit service along San Pablo Avenue, specifically the Transbay services. More accessible transit and improved transit stop infrastructure were perceived as important aspects for the corridor's future.

### Transit Routes

Some community members articulated the importance of East-West transit connections and expressed support for additional routes and service for connectivity to and from Central Berkeley and UC Berkeley.

### Private vs Public Transit

Community members expressed varied interest and support for private shuttles. Some community comments suggested greater shuttle service throughout San Pablo Avenue, while others raised concerns about a two-tier transit system and suggested transit investment in public networks.

### Parking

- The community expressed mixed feedback related to parking. Some local residents express concern about parking overflow from new developments into adjacent residential neighborhoods. Other comments supported not requiring parking with residential or commercial uses.

***“My business’ storefront isn’t visible to people driving by because of cars parking in front of the store 24/7 [blocking the view and lack of timed parking enforcement].”***

– Small Group Meeting Comment

- Some community comments express desire for greater parking enforcement for vehicles parked beyond the maximum parking times.
- Several local businesses and large employers expressed support for maximum parking times to prevent long-term parking in front of their businesses for extended periods of time.



## 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.

The portion of San Pablo Avenue within Berkeley does not have existing bicycle facilities. Four East-West streets have existing bicycle facilities that cross San Pablo Avenue going East-West (Gilman Street, Virginia Street, Delaware Street, and Channing Way). The Alameda CTC Parallel Bike Improvement Project will construct bike safety and connectivity improvements along streets parallel to and across San Pablo Avenue, there are no plans on providing bicycle lanes on the majority of San Pablo Avenue. Bicycle improvements for the Bus and Bike Lanes Project will extend into the southern city limit to Heinz Avenue.

## Utilities

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.

## Community Feedback

### Transportation Safety

- Throughout the community outreach, participants stated that they desire a more pedestrian friendly corridor, as survey data and feedback found walking as the second most common mode of transportation to and from San Pablo Avenue.
- Community feedback reveals that San Pablo Avenue currently acts as a stress-inducing barrier between east and west Study Area community.
- Several community members expressed concerns about cycling across and along San Pablo Avenue. The most frequent concern was safety due to vehicular traffic and lack of protected bike lanes.
- Community comments included suggestions for a variety of bike infrastructure including bike lanes along San Pablo Avenue and/or cross-streets, and bike boulevard crossing improvements.

### Utilities

- Development stakeholders expressed concern about the time and cost of making utility connections, particularly when connections occur on San Pablo Avenue and require approvals by Caltrans.

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

– Open House Comment



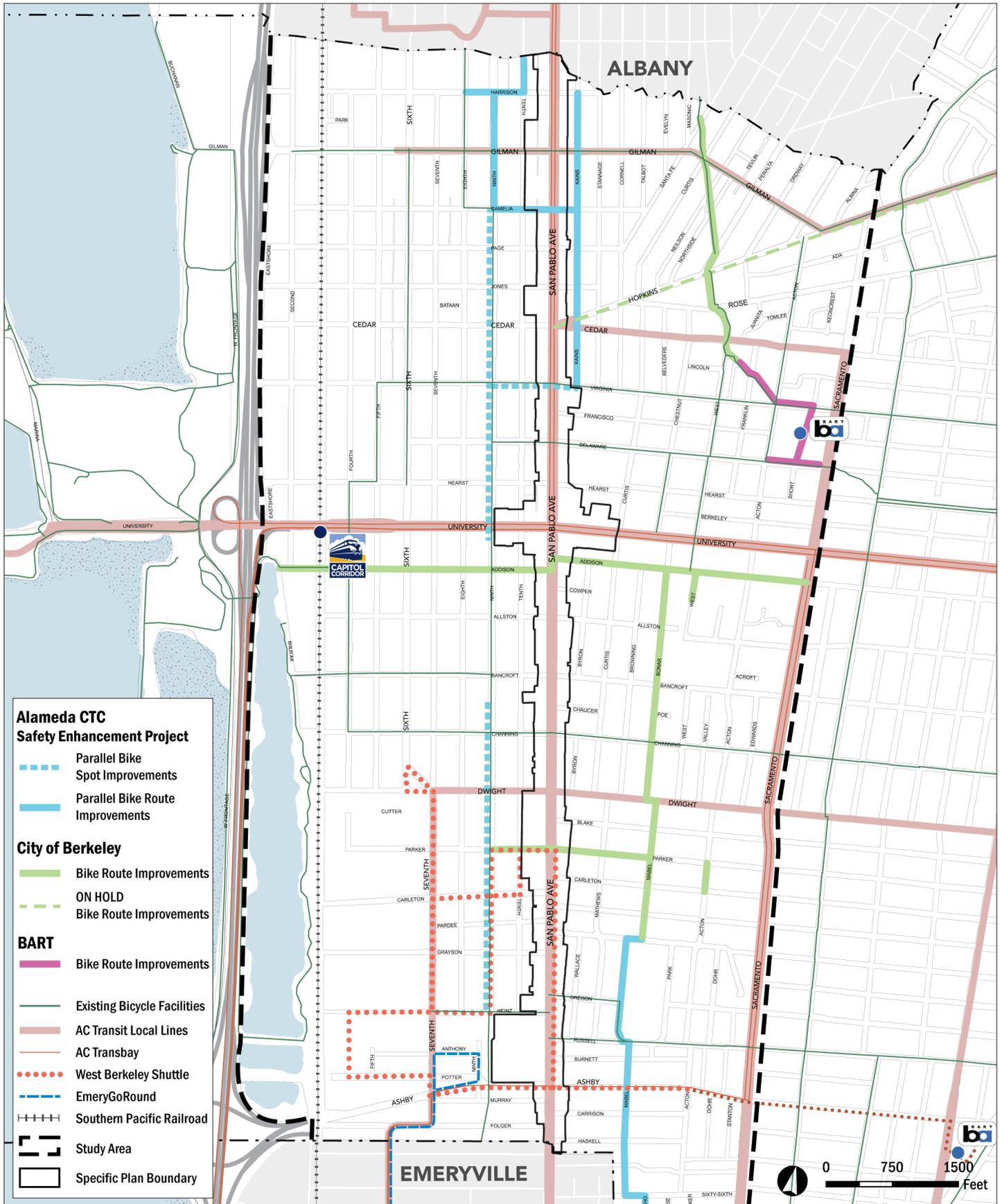


Figure 19. Transit Lines and Bicycle Routes. Source: City of Berkeley, Alameda CTC, and Fehr & Peers, 2023.

## Economic Development

Berkeley's Office of Economic Development's (OED's) 2016 Economic Development Work Session highlights two existing economic tensions along San Pablo Avenue:

- Local and regional interests for transportation and land use compete for space. Local interests include 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.
- Demand for housing development in the area threatens to displace the existing concentration of auto businesses along San Pablo Avenue.

The COVID-19 pandemic and broader economic impacts have also affected the corridor and businesses across the city. 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. 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.

There are several existing business organizations within the Specific Plan Area and Study Area:

- Gilman district association (Local breweries, organic wineries, food producers, shopping, art).
- West Berkeley Design Loop: Group of local merchants, designers, consultants, and builders that provide unique products and services for design and building projects.
- SoU (South University) Berkeley "eclectic fun shopping district in West Berkeley, South of University near 4th Street".
- West Berkeley Artisans and Industrial Companies (WEBAIC): Collaboration of PDRR (Production, distribution, repair and recycling companies), existing art, music and dance studios, initiated by Office of Economic Development.

## Community Feedback



### Vacancy

Many community members across all outreach events expressed concern over ground-floor vacancies along the corridor. Several concerns were raised related to the vacancy, including:

- Reduced vitality and vibrancy along the corridor.
- Fewer “eyes on the street”, resulting in personal safety concerns.
- Visual and aesthetic concerns regarding dilapidated storefronts.

During the outreach process, participants voiced support for commercial uses and advocated for programs and incentives to fill vacant ground floor space. This is coupled with a belief that there is too much retail space given current demand, and therefore there is a desire to allow and encourage other uses. Throughout the outreach, when asked about opportunities vacant storefront could provide, participants expressed a desire for more community gathering space, entertainment and temporary uses to avoid long term vacancies and accompanying maintenance issues. Generally, community members would like to see more support for businesses to fill those spaces.

### Business Incentives

Participants describe San Pablo Avenue as a series of commercial destinations, with household goods, food stores and restaurants/cafes being the most frequently visited destinations. They would like to see more financial support for existing small businesses, such as Mi Terra and Casa Latina, and are worried about losing small and local businesses.

### Tourism/ Marketing/BID

Participants suggested organizing special events with local artists and performers. They also recommended establishing a Business Improvement District in retail-heavy segments or nodes to fund streetscape improvements.

### Relationship to West Berkeley Employment Development

Several comments highlighted the lack of safe walking paths between employment campuses and San Pablo Avenue. Participants also expressed a desire for more “quick and easy” lunch places, as well as after-work restaurants to enhance the area’s vibrancy after work hours.



***“San Pablo is not a shopping destination [like 4th St], rather people travel to specific businesses along the corridor.”***

– Business Small Group Meeting participant

There is currently no Business Improvement District associated with San Pablo Avenue. However, there are several city-led programs and initiatives to support small and independently owned businesses in Berkeley, which can help to make San Pablo Avenue a more attractive retail location. These include:

- **Zoning Amendments:** Berkeley’s City Council passed the Zoning Amendments for Berkeley Business package on February, 2024 to encourage local economic development and enhance cultural offerings in an equitable manner across Berkeley. The zoning ordinance changes are wide ranging; spanning the permitting of group class instruction, the service of distilled spirits, expanded hours of operation, live entertainment, pet stores, art and craft studios, outdoor food service, and the removal of restrictions related to change of use, removal of food service quotas, and rentals of food service establishments to third parties.
- **Revolving Loan Fund & Resiliency Loan Program:** The City of Berkeley’s Revolving Loan Fund offers capital to Berkeley-based businesses and entrepreneurs for various growth and operational needs, targeting those who don’t qualify for traditional bank loans.
- **#DiscoveredinBerkeley Campaign:** The Discovered in Berkeley marketing campaign showcased diverse local businesses, achieving over 3.8 million impressions and 146 thousand direct engagements through various online platforms and social media promotions.
- **Expanded Outdoor Commerce:** In 2020 and 2021, the City of Berkeley expanded outdoor activity allowances and streamlined permits, now offering businesses a permanent option for outdoor commerce installations with fees starting May 20, 2024, anticipating over 30 businesses to participate.
- **Art Investments:** The City established a Civic Arts grant program offering up to \$5,000 each in Fiscal Year 2025 to support local arts and cultural programming. In addition, the City created a Capital Project Grant for local nonprofit arts and cultural organizations for real estate and capital project support.



*“San Pablo is not a shopping destination [like 4th St], rather people travel to specific businesses along the corridor.”*

– Business Small Group Meeting participant







### Chapter 3

# Key Themes + Issues

This chapter summarizes key themes and issues identified throughout the Existing Conditions and Community Assessment phase. These findings will inform the development of policies, programs, guidelines and incentives for the Specific Plan. The summary is organized by theme, though many issues are interconnected and span multiple themes. Overall, the Community Assessment revealed three overarching objectives for the community’s vision for the Specific Plan:

**1**

Provide guidelines and incentives for more housing that improves the vitality of the corridor.

**2**

Remove barriers and integrate San Pablo Ave with the surrounding community and shape opportunities for neighborhood life.

**3**

Broaden opportunities for business and community activities that can adapt to economic and market conditions.

## Increase Business and Activity Along the Corridor



### Improve Commercial Identity

The Commercial Nodes are not being realized. While C-W nodes are intended to concentrate retail, commercial, and mixed-use hubs along San Pablo Avenue, actual commercial activity and proposed housing developments are dispersed throughout the corridor.

### Reduce Commercial and Retail Vacancy

The Community Assessment revealed that commercial and retail vacancy along San Pablo Avenue is a concern for all community groups. Key issues identified through the existing conditions research, and community feedback as contributing factors to vacancy include:

- **Current market conditions:** Vacancy rates increased due to broader economic impacts, leading to vacant and abandoned commercial ground floors throughout the corridor.
- **Land-use and regulatory restrictions:**
  - Limited range of permitted land-uses
  - Lengthy and costly permitting process
- **Over supply of retail spaces:** Mixed-use developments are allowed greater heights than residential-only developments, incentivizing the construction of more mixed-use buildings and commercial space. However, due to current economic market conditions and land-use restrictions, many retail and commercial ground floor space remain vacant.
- **Incompatible design:** The design of commercial and retail spaces are not compatible with small

### Support Local Business Vitality and Growth

Both the small business community and the developer community cited the following challenges and barriers for small businesses to start-up and thrive.

- **Permitting process:** The permitting process for new businesses is very long, adding costs and uncertainty to small business owners.
- **High start-up costs:**
  - Tenant improvements are a substantial cost for small businesses and are often prohibitive in new commercial spaces.
  - Compliance with commercial use regulations often requires additional costly tenant improvements, such as adding bathrooms and installing grease-ducts, driving up costs beyond what smaller businesses can afford.
- **Ongoing maintenance and curb-appeal:** Existing property owners/businesses/tenants face challenges in maintaining the street frontage and sidewalk next to their property due to incidents of vandalism and theft. The issue results in both a financial and time-sensitive burden demotivating additional street frontage improvements.

## Increase Housing Supply and Diversity

The Community Assessment findings indicate overall support for housing along San Pablo Avenue. The following includes key issues raised by the local and professional community as to the challenges of low housing supply and development.

### Revise Housing Development Regulations

Residential zoning regulations for Mixed-Use and Residential-only development are overly restrictive regarding height, floor area ratio, and ground-floor commercial requirements, therefore restricting development.

### Support Increased Diversity of Housing Types

There are limited opportunities for home ownership other than single-family detached options, limiting options for renters and workers to stay within the community.

### Support Housing Affordability

There is a need for Affordable Housing for people with a range of incomes on the corridor and throughout the city.



## Improve and Increase Interaction between Private and Public Spaces

### Encourage Engaging Buildings

Residents from surrounding neighborhoods feel isolated from new residential buildings, describing those as a single “bulky” development. The lack of connection between the public realm and private open space oriented away from San Pablo Avenue reduces interactive experiences.

### Support Engaging Site Frontage

Large vacant parking lots, and long, windowless frontages contribute to an alienating public environment that discourages walkability and makes pedestrians feel unsafe by fragmenting the urban fabric.



## Improve the Public Realm



### Increase Amount and Quality of Sidewalk Space

- The sidewalk width is limited by the amount of right of way currently used for vehicles due to San Pablo Avenue’s regional function and designation as a state highway. The sidewalk narrows at several locations where existing development, landscaping, and other furnishing extends into it.
- The narrow sidewalk in combination with higher speeds of bypassing vehicles negatively affects pedestrian comfort and opportunities for public interaction.



### Improve Lighting and Maintenance of Sidewalk and Landscape

- Several sidewalk segments lack the upkeep and maintenance of sidewalk, such as trash cleanup, paving and landscaping of tree wells.
- The absence of essential public amenities, particularly pedestrian lighting for nighttime safety, is a concern. Currently, there are insufficient public funds available to address these improvements. This shortage impacts public safety and community well-being.



### Increase Public Open Space and Community Gathering Space

- There are no publicly owned parcels available to convert or adapt into open spaces, and limited funds may restrict the possibility of acquiring additional land for this purpose.
- There is a shortage of community gathering spaces, as private open areas within new developments are inaccessible to the public. Third spaces are limited to semi-private locations, such as restaurant and café seating, and some private surface

## Enhance local Access

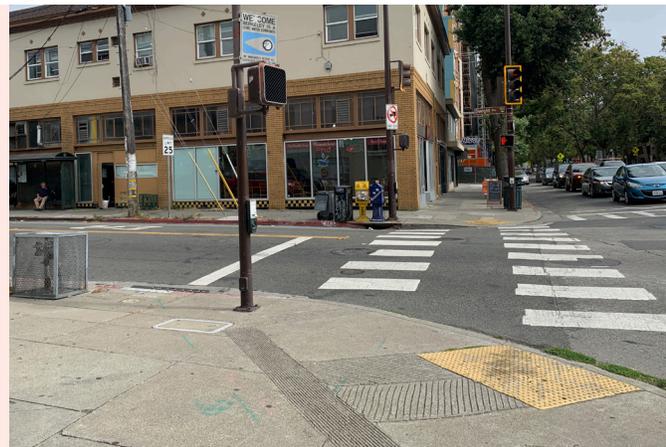
### Improve East-West Connectivity

- Pedestrians and bicyclists feel unsafe crossing San Pablo Avenue.
- East-West transit routes are limited in number and frequency.
- San Pablo Avenue suffers from a deficiency in public transit connections between East and West Berkeley, exacerbating its function as a barrier between neighborhoods. Presently, private shuttles operated by major employers and UC Berkeley bridge this gap to a degree. However, their availability to the public is limited with no guarantee of access.



### Enhance Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Access

- High car volume and fast speeds contribute to pedestrian and bicycle safety concerns.
- There are limited crossing points along San Pablo Avenue and many community members feel unsafe crossing the road.
- There is limited connectivity to adjacent parks and community spaces around San Pablo Avenue including a lack of clear signage, pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly pathways, and safe crossing facilities, further hindering community engagement and access to recreational areas.



### Transit Access and Frequency/Availability

- AC Transit's Realign Plan is still in development. So, the future of local transit service along San Pablo Avenue is uncertain.

### Parking/ Loading Access/ Management of On-Street Parking

- Potential reduction of on-street parking and loading along San Pablo Ave, as well as lack of time-parking enforcement makes

