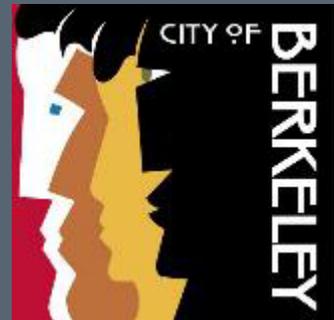


# San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

Work Session



# Agenda

---

- 1. Project Background**
- 2. Outreach**
- 3. Overview of the Specific Plan**
  - Vision and Desired Results
  - Land Use
  - Economic Development
  - Streets and Public Realms
  - Objective Design Standards
- 4. West Berkeley Plan**
- 5. Next Steps**



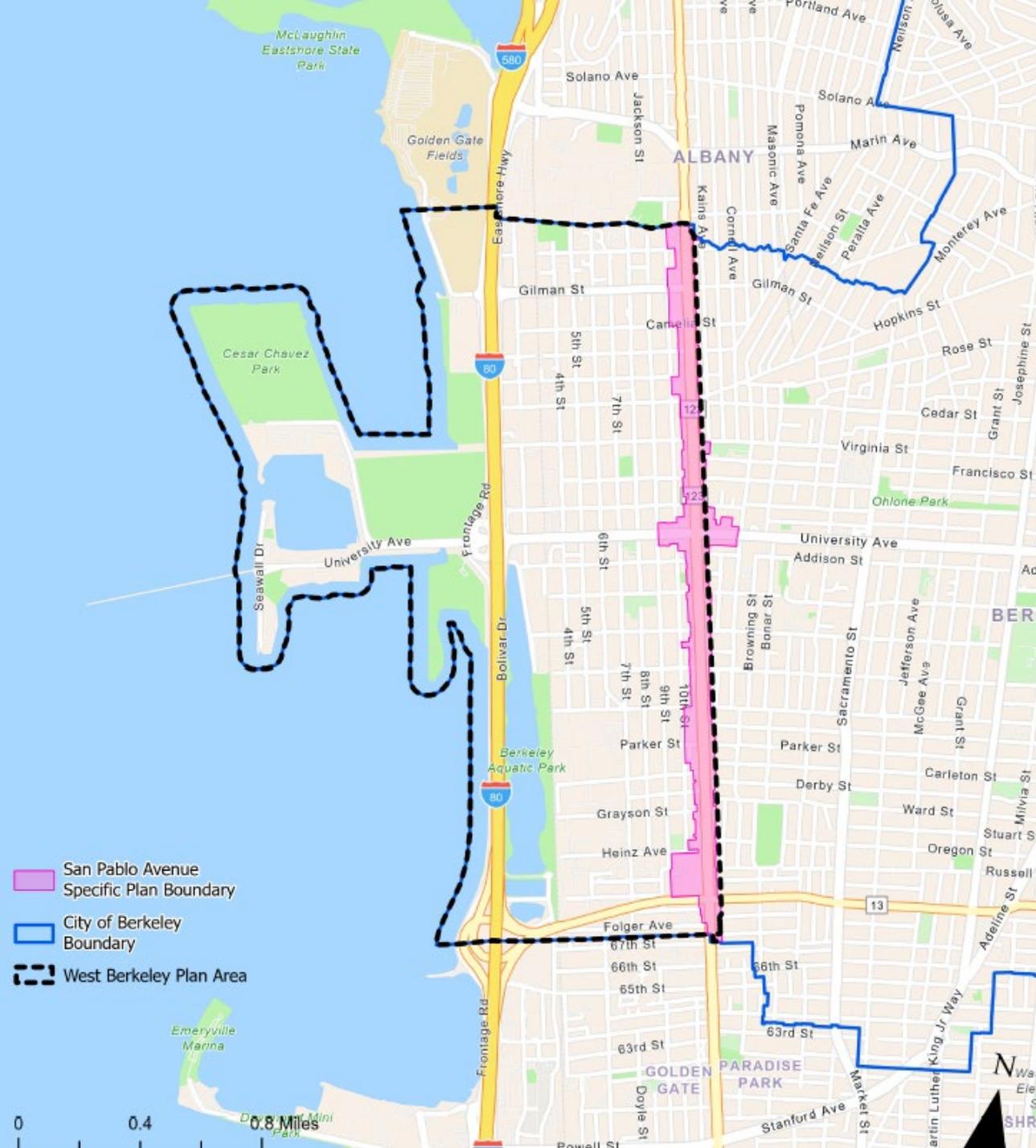
*Develop a San Pablo Avenue Corridor PDA Specific Plan, which will increase allowed densities and/or development capacity, and study design standards, public improvements, and mechanisms to incentivize affordable housing.*

## Why this Specific Plan?

1. 2015 City Council Referral –  
“Develop a Plan to guide development on San Pablo Ave”
2. Priority Development Areas (PDA) Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) designation
  - a) ABAG/MTC Grant 2021
3. Housing Element 2023-2031:  
Program 27 - Priority Development Areas (PDA), Commercial and Transit Corridors –  
“increase new housing opportunities...on commercial and transit corridors”

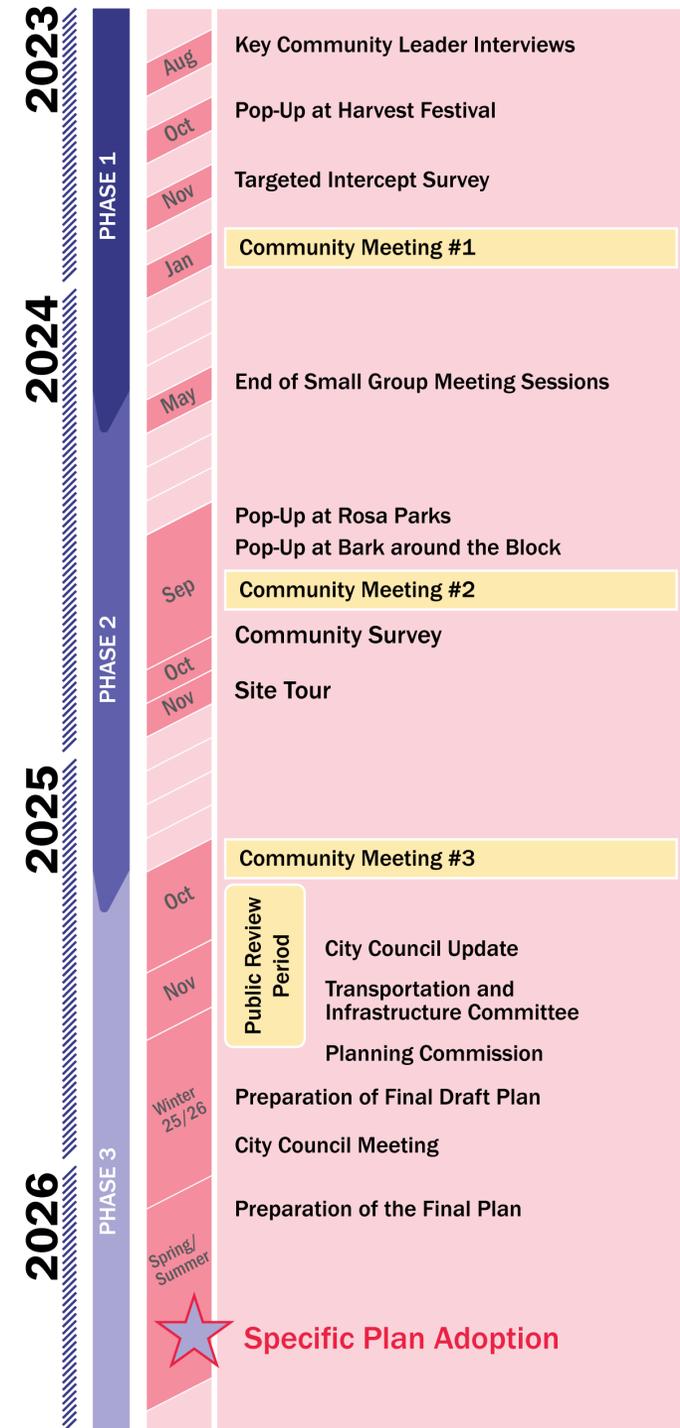
# Specific Plan Boundary and Study Area

- Derived from the MTC-defined PDA
- Most of the parcels are part of existing West Berkeley Commercial district (C-W)
- Refined to include opportunity sites
- Includes parcels in the West Berkeley Plan Area

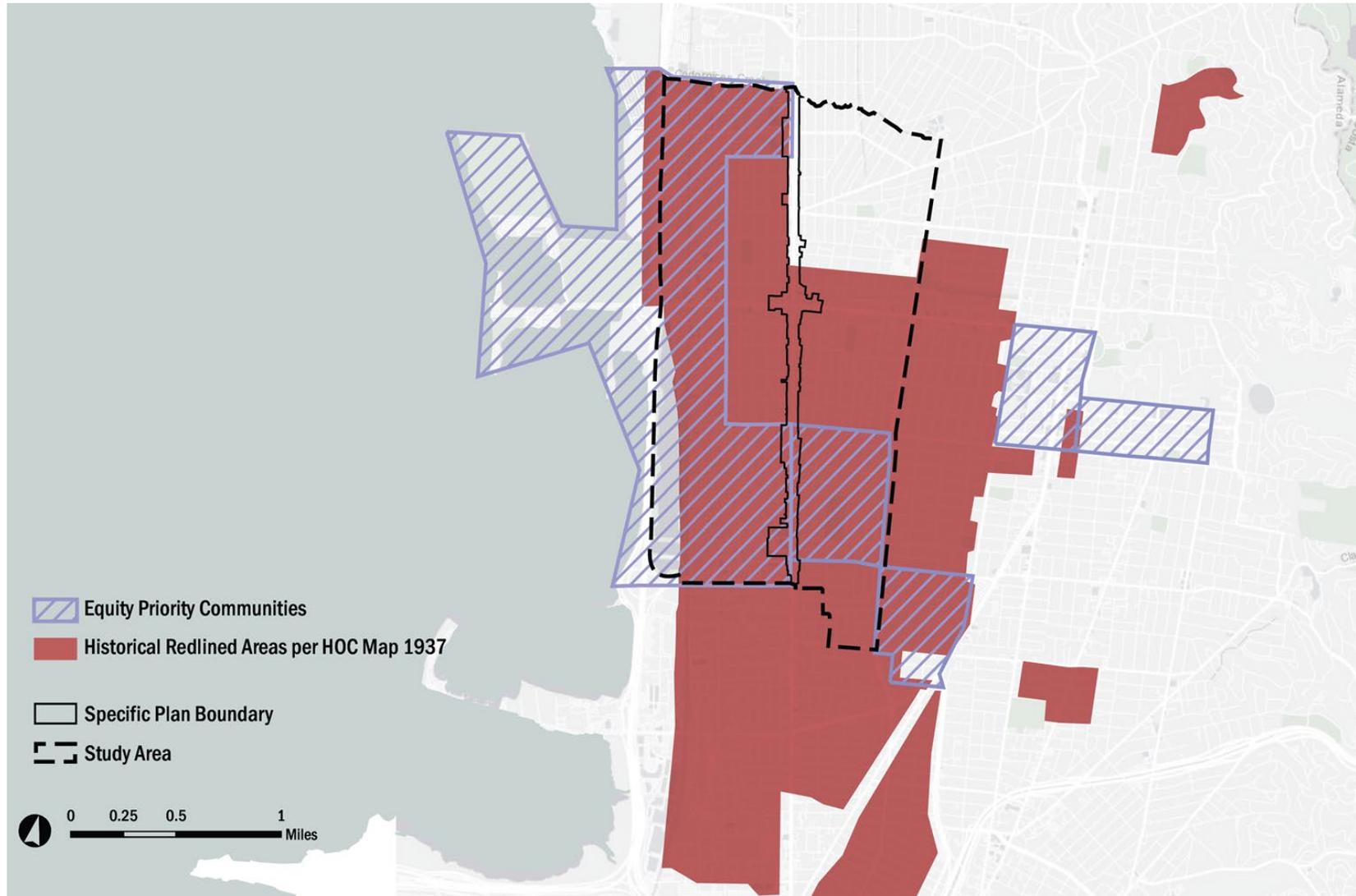


# Community Engagement and Plan Development Process

<b>Phase 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key Community Leader Interviews</li> <li>Pop-up at the Harvest Festival</li> <li>Small Group Meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted Intercept Survey</li> <li>Community Meeting #1</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pop-up at Rosa Parks Elementary</li> <li>Community Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Meeting #2</li> <li>Site Tour</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Community Meeting #3</b></li> <li><b>Public Review Draft Period</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Public Hearings</b></li> </ul>



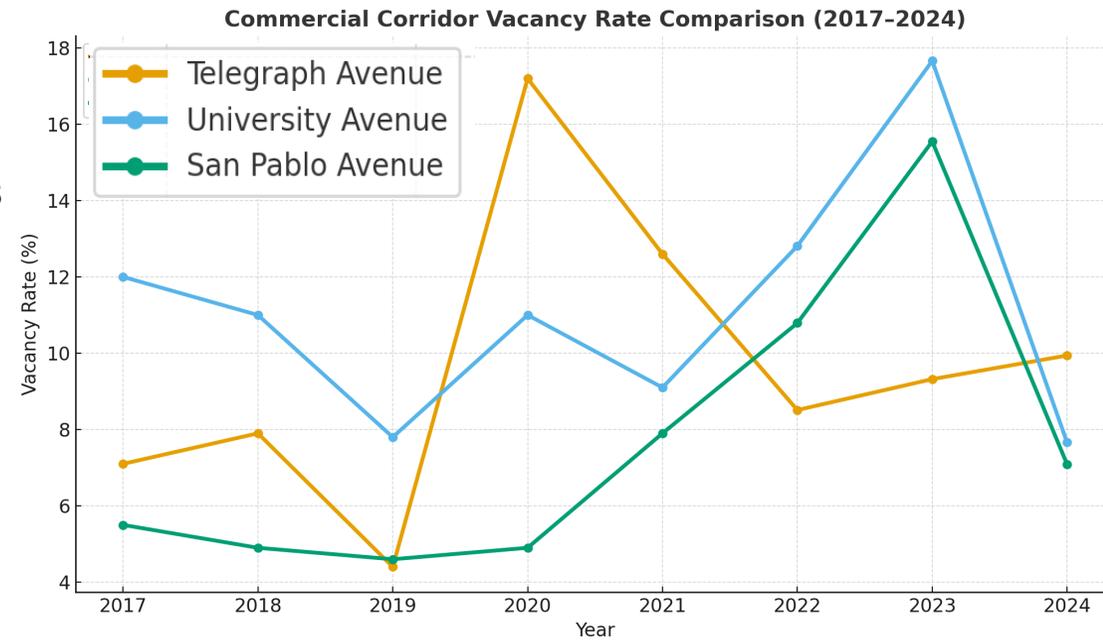
# Demographics and Equity



**Equity Priority Communities and Redlined Communities.** Source: Robert K. Nelson and Edward L Ayers, Mapping Redlining, 2023. MTC, EPC Data, 2021.

# Commercial Activity

- In 2023, 90% of brick-and-mortar businesses are locally owned:
  - 21% are woman owned
  - 41% are people of color owned
- Ground-floor vacancy rate estimate for San Pablo Avenue
  - Between 2017 and 2022 doubled from 5.5% to 10.8%
  - Peaked at 15.5% in 2023
  - Currently 7.1% in 2024
- Retail continues to be largest source of sales tax revenue for the area



Woman Owned Auto Repair Shop on San Pablo Ave.

# Transportation and Public Space

- **San Pablo Avenue is a State Highway**
  - Any improvements require approval by Caltrans
- **Alameda CTC San Pablo Corridor Projects**
  - Safety Enhancement Projects (Berkeley and Albany)
  - Parallel Bike Improvements Project (Berkeley, Albany, North Oakland)
  - Bus Lane and Bike Lane Project (Oakland, Emeryville, South Berkeley)
- **Public Space**
  - No public parks or plazas along San Pablo Avenue
  - Sidewalk is only public space
  - Sidewalk conditions vary
  - Tree canopy is unique to Berkeley along full length of San Pablo Avenue



*Mature London Plane trees define the character of San Pablo Ave*



*Sidewalks in many locations in need of maintenance*

# What We've Heard from the Community

- Support for affordable, mixed-income, high-density housing
- Concerns about “tunnel effect” and “flat” facades of new buildings
- Frustration with poor lighting, sidewalk and mobility conditions
- Desire for engaging, greener, more vibrant and social public realm
- Strong interest in allowing flexible use in ground-floor spaces to reduce vacancy and improve vibrancy



5 Community Leader Interviews

5 Focus Groups

2 Community Workshops

3 Pop-ups

2 Surveys

1 Site Tour

## Vision

San Pablo Avenue will be a vibrant, mixed-use district that connects neighborhoods, supports a variety of housing and local business, and reflects Berkeley's cultural heritage.



# Desired Results



Increased Diversity of Housing Types and Supply of Housing



Increased Business Activity to Support a Thriving Community



Enhancing Interaction between Public and Private Spaces



Enhanced Local and Citywide Access

*“[A] Lively corridor where people from all walks of life can enjoy, mingle, and support local businesses. Good mix of housing, restaurants, stores.”*  
– Community Open House

# Specific Plan Overview

The Plan is organized into six chapters and includes supplemental Objective Design Standards:



## Review the Draft Specific Plan

The Public Review Draft Plan is available on the City's Website at the QR code below



City Website LINK

# What We've Heard – Land Use

- A desire for more housing, both in quantity and diversity of housing types
- Overall agreement that the Nodes should be the focus of the Plan Area vitality
- Community members want more affordable, mixed-income housing, however, are concerned with excessive height and massing.
- Across all outreach events, we've heard concerns about high storefront vacancy rates.

**Increased Diversity of Housing Types and Supply of Housing**



**Increased Business Activity to Support a Thriving Community**

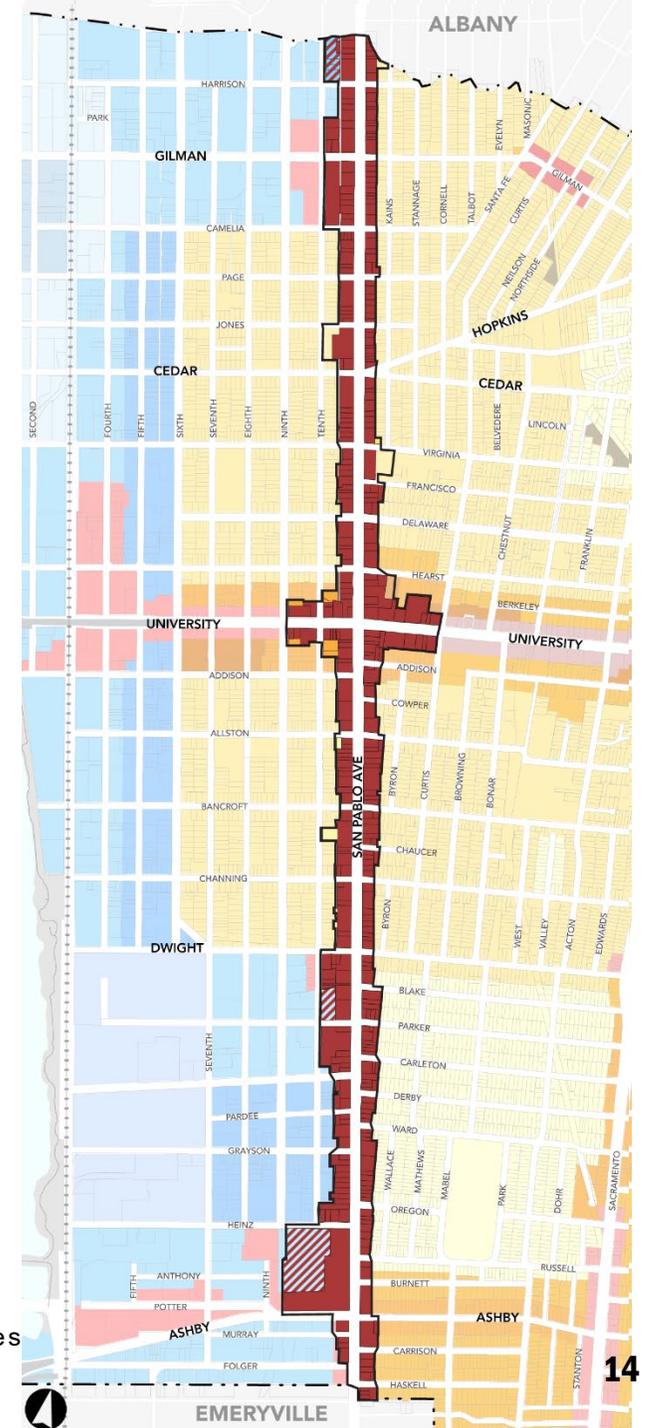


# Zoning Changes

## New C-SP Commercial San Pablo Zoning District

### Proposed Specific Plan Changes

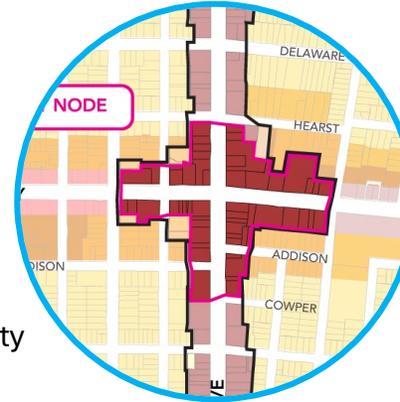
-  New C-SP Zoning District
-  Specific Plan Area
-  Specific Plan Designated Nodes



# Zoning Changes

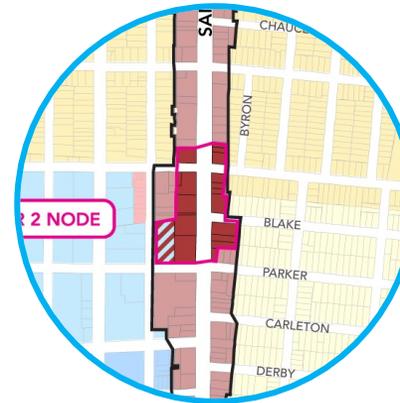
- New C-SP Commercial San Pablo Zoning District with updates development standards
- New tier node framework with greater intensity for tier 1 nodes

**Tier 1:**  
Greatest Intensity



Tier 1: University, Gilman and Ashby

**Tier 2:**  
Less Intensity



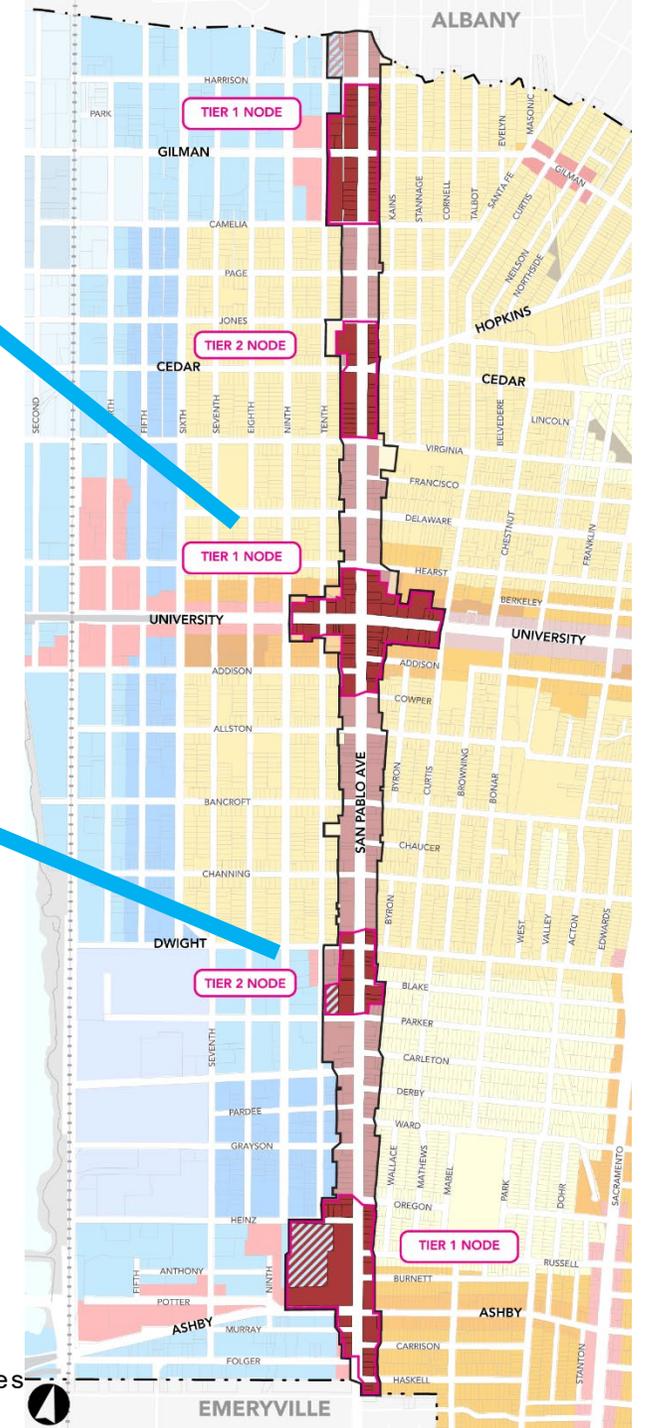
Tier 2: Cedar and Dwight

**Proposed Specific Plan Changes**

 New C-SP Zoning District

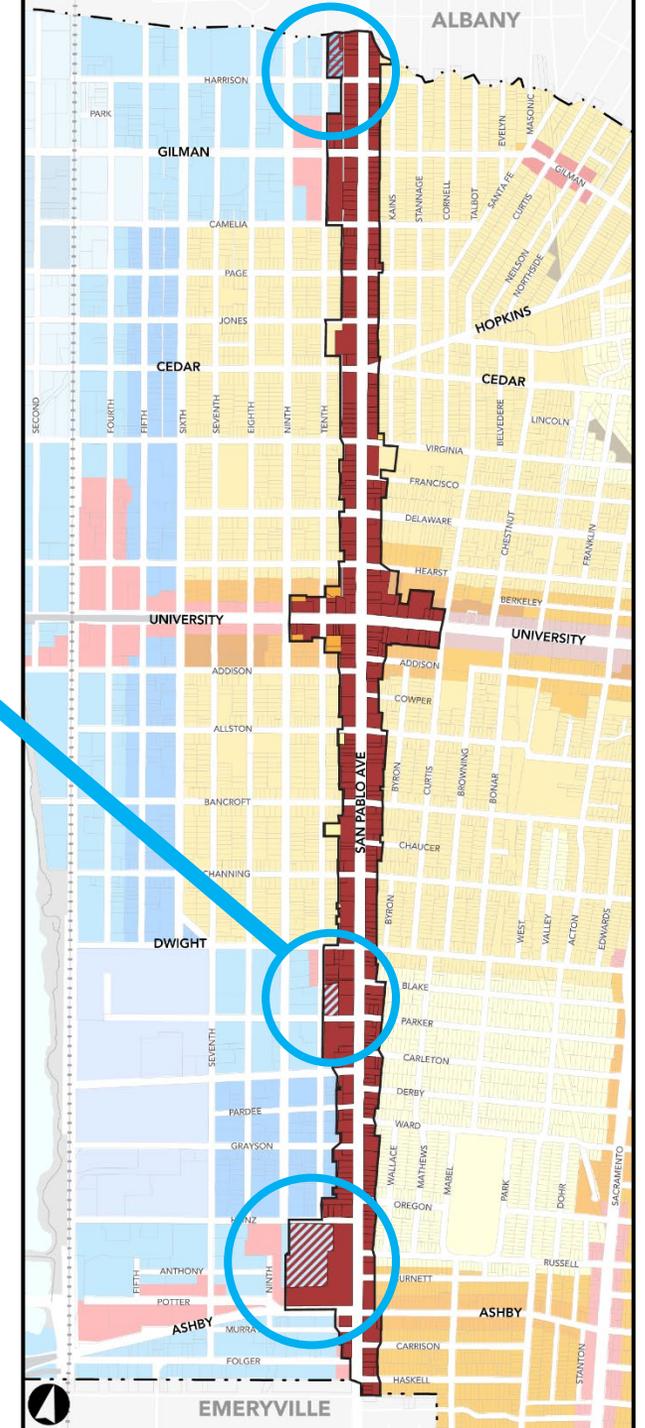
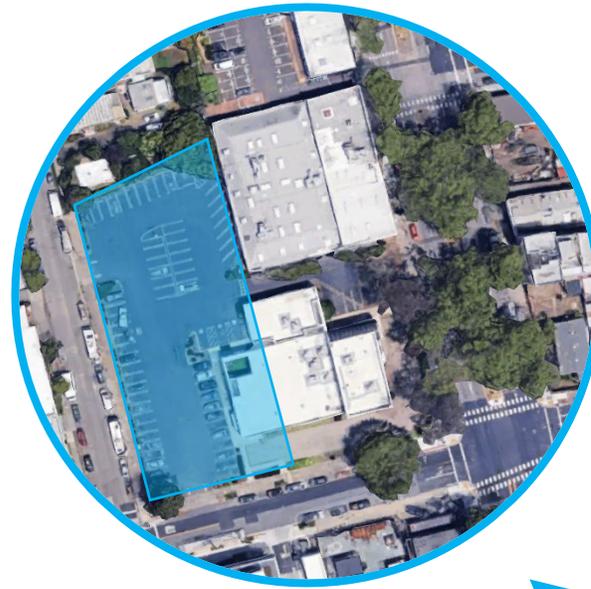
 Specific Plan Area

 Specific Plan Designated Nodes



# Zoning Changes

- New C-SP Commercial San Pablo Zoning District with updates development standards
- New tier node framework with greater intensity for tier 1 nodes
- New Overlay to allow and encourage 100% affordable and family-friendly units



# Existing and Proposed Development Standards

Zone/ Category	Existing C-W		Proposed C-SP				
	Single-Use	Mixed-Use	Outside Nodes		Proposed C-SP Nodes		
			Single-Use	Mixed-Use	Commercial/ Light Industrial	Tier 1 Nodes	Tier 2 Nodes
<b>Max Height</b>	40'	50'	40'	<b>55'</b>	40'	<b>85'</b>	<b>65'</b>
<b>Max Stories</b>	3	4	3	<b>5</b>	3	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>FAR</b>	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	<b>4.75</b>	<b>3.75</b>
<b>Usable Open Space</b> <i>(only applies to residential uses)</i>							40 SF/Unit
<b>Lot Coverage</b>							100%



## Questions – Land Use

- Are the proposed development standards appropriate for their respective locations?
- Should there be different development standards in the nodes?
- Should the Specific Plan include the proposed Housing Overlay?

# San Pablo Avenue Density Bonus Program

- Provides an alternative to the State Density Bonus
- **In-lieu fee** to the City's **Affordable Housing Trust Fund**
- Developers must follow the Plan's **Objective Design Standards**



## What We've Heard – Economic Development

- Community expressed a desire for a mix of local-serving businesses, affordable retail and variety of restaurants, cafes and bars.
- Input from businesses, architecture, and developer stakeholders identified challenges that hinder ground floor commercial use. Retail professionals cited an oversupply of commercial space.
- Tenant Improvements costs are often prohibitive for small business and existing storefronts are not suitable for many small businesses because of insufficient improvements

**Increased Business Activity to Support a Thriving Community**



# Commercial In-Lieu Fee

- Allows residential **ground floors in-lieu of commercial space** outside the nodes
- **In-lieu Fee** to San Pablo Avenue Focus **Small Business Support Fund**

# Revolving Loan Fund

- Financed through a combination of **ground floor in-lieu fees**, community benefits, and other sources

# Business Improvement District



*Small businesses can apply for a loan for:*

- *Tenant Improvements*
- *Relocation within the Plan Area*
- *Succession Planning*

# Questions – Economic Development

- Are there specific economic development policies that should not be included in the Specific Plan?
- Are there any other economic development policies or strategies that the Specific Plan should consider?

# What We've Heard – Public Realm

- Support for buildings with engage and active building frontages
- New development are creating “urban gated communities” that are nice to live in, but not to live around
- Participants would like to see the ground floor and underused spaces to become community gathering spaces or places for outdoor community events, food trucks, pop-up retail to support local businesses or art events

**Enhanced Interaction between Public and Private Spaces**



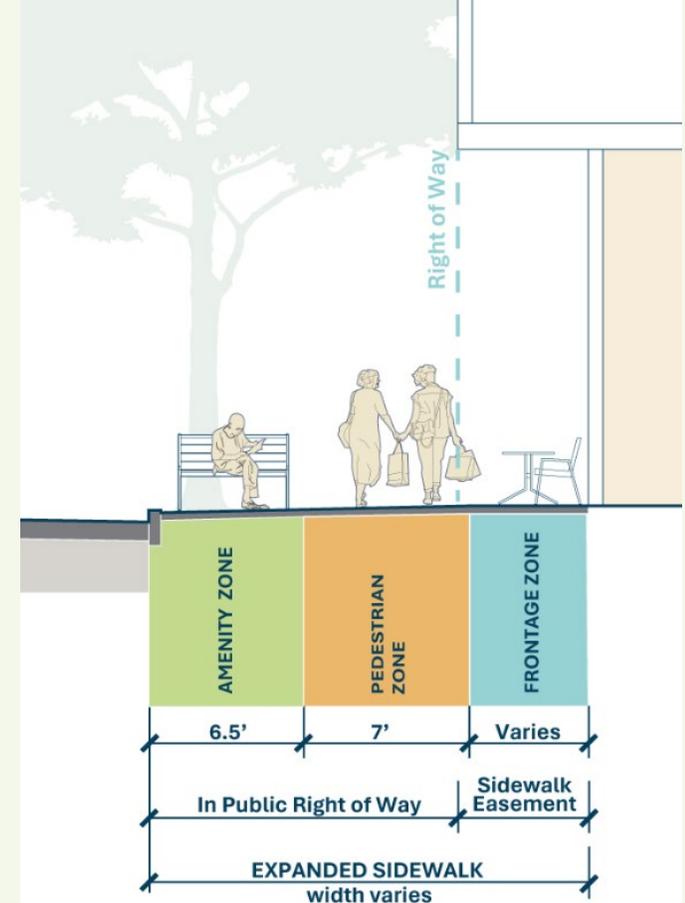
**Enhanced Local and Citywide Access**



# Sidewalk Easements

# Streetscape Standards

# Public Space Incentives



# Side Street Plazas

# Safety and Speed Management

# Improve Intersections and Connections



## Question – Public Realm

Are the proposed street design and mobility strategies sufficient to address safety and comfort for all travel modes along San Pablo Avenue?

# Objective Design Standards (ODS)

## Standards for Medium and Mid-Rise Multi-Family

- Modulation & Articulation
- Step backs & Neighborhood Transitions
- Roof Treatments & Fenestration



## Storefront Standards

- Frontage Setbacks & Character
- Entry and Window Façade Standards (orientation and transparency, awnings, etc.)
- Dimensions & Interior Requirements for Tenant Spaces
- Venting / Grease Interceptors



## Residential Ground Floor

- Setback and Frontage Character
- Floor Above Grade (balance privacy and eyes on the street)
- Individual Unit Residential Entries (transition from public to private space, etc.)
- Shared Residential Entries (frequency and design)



# Questions – Objective Design Standards (ODS)

- To what extent should the proposed Specific Plan incorporate Objective Design Standards?
- How can the proposed Specific Plan balance the inclusion of Objective Design Standards with flexibility to avoid being overly prescriptive?
- Should ODS be applied to all projects, or only to certain types (e.g., larger multi-family projects)?
- Should ODS replace Design Review (BMC Section 23.406.070)?



### West Berkeley Plan (1993)

- Nearly all of the Plan's implementation measures have been completed
- Retirement of the WBP could simplify future policy development in West Berkeley

### Question

Should the West Berkeley Plan be amended specifically to enact the Specific Plan, or should it be retired altogether?

# Next Steps

- **Winter 2025/2026**
  - Public Review Draft is available on the Website for comments until mid January
  - Transportation and Infrastructure Commission
  - Planning Commission Meeting
  - Preparation of the Final Draft Plan
  - City Council Meeting
- **Spring/Summer 2026**
  - Preparation of the Final Plan
  - Plan Adoption at Planning Commission and City Council

# Land Use

- Are the proposed development standards appropriate for their respective locations?
- Should there be different development standards in the nodes?
- Should the Specific Plan include the proposed Housing Overlay?

# Economic Development

- Are there specific economic development policies that should not be included in the Specific Plan?
- Are there any other economic development policies or strategies that the Specific Plan should consider?

# Public Realm

Are the proposed street design and mobility strategies sufficient to address safety and comfort for all travel modes along San Pablo Avenue?

## Objective Design Standards (ODS)

To what extent should the proposed Specific Plan incorporate Objective Design Standards?

How can the proposed Specific Plan balance the inclusion of Objective Design Standards with flexibility to avoid being overly prescriptive?

Should ODS be applied to all projects, or only to certain types (e.g., larger multi-family projects)?