



Berkeley City Councilmember
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ACTION CALENDAR

January 27, 2026

To: Members of the Berkeley City Council

From: Councilmember Mark Humbert (Author);
[Mayor Adena Ishii \(Co-Author\)](#);
Councilmember Ben Bartlett (Co-Author)

Subject: Project to Increase Telegraph and Claremont Housing (PITCH) Rezoning

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the City Manager the Project to Increase Telegraph and Claremont Housing (PITCH) as a standalone rezoning effort to proactively and equitably increase housing stock in southeast Berkeley's high-resource areas. This project would seek to:

1. Rezone the Telegraph Avenue corridor south of Parker Street from the current C-C (Commercial-Corridor) district to the C-T (Telegraph Avenue Commercial) district (or similar), allowing for taller mixed-use housing development, with a goal of base zoning of 8 stories/85 feet.
2. Identify and upzone specific auto-oriented C-N (Neighborhood Commercial) parcels in the Claremont and Ashby area (near Domingo Avenue) from their current 2–3 story limits to 4–6 stories using existing or new zoning districts.
3. Allocate funding to begin required planning and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review for the proposed zoning changes.

SUMMARY

This item proposes a new, targeted rezoning effort to deliver a substantial and equitable increase in zoned housing capacity in District 8 (and limited portions of District 3 along Telegraph). The Project to Increase Telegraph and Claremont Housing (PITCH) focuses on the under-utilized Telegraph Avenue corridor, which offers significant capacity (estimated up to 5,700 new units), excellent transit access, and larger, more easily developable parcels.

By simultaneously applying targeted upzoning to auto-oriented sites in the highest-resource Claremont neighborhood, the project would fulfill Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) and other Housing Element goals by expanding housing opportunities into the highest-resource parts of Berkeley. This strategic approach ensures a significant and geographically equitable

contribution to Berkeley's housing goals, while potentially relieving pressure on more commercially and architecturally sensitive areas.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The estimated cost to execute the necessary initial planning, staff time, and comprehensive environmental review (CEQA) for PITCH is \$250,000. To ensure the viability and timely commencement of this project, Councilmember Humbert commits to funding:

- \$100,000 from his Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 office budget.
- \$50,000 from his FY 2027 office budget.

The total contribution of \$150,000 helps make the project viable for immediate launch, allowing the balance to be secured from other general City funds or grant opportunities in FY 2027.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Telegraph Avenue, from Parker Street south to the Oakland border, is currently zoned C-C, which sets a base zoning for development of 3-story mixed-use or residential buildings. This represents a severe under-utilization of a key corridor located in a High Resource zone (slated to be upgraded to a Highest Resource area by 2026 TCAC maps) and which features wide street sections (~66' of traffic lanes) and large parcels ideal for higher-density housing.

Furthermore, new housing production has been disproportionately low in the highest-resource neighborhoods of District 8, such as Claremont. Although certain portions of the Claremont area have recently seen their housing capacity increase due to the City's Middle Housing efforts, fire risks and a limited number of underutilized non-residential parcels mean that, absent this project, this area is unlikely to contribute appreciably to the creation of new homes in Berkeley.

BACKGROUND

The City of Berkeley has a State mandate and made local commitments to increase housing production in high-resource, transit-rich areas. Telegraph Avenue's length, infrastructure, and under-developed parcels present an excellent opportunity for high-density housing. The State of California's new law (SB 79) will already require upzoning near Ashby BART (District 3) and the adjacent Telegraph/Alcatraz area, making a comprehensive upzoning of the entire Telegraph corridor both a logical and proactive step.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

This project is an effective approach to better meeting Berkeley's housing and equity goals:

- Increasing Housing Capacity on Telegraph: Rezoning Telegraph to C-T (8-stories) is projected to create a zoned housing capacity of up to around 5,700 units—a vital contribution to Berkeley's housing stock.
- Equitable Development:

- The Telegraph corridor is located in a High Resource area and the project will better satisfy Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing goals.
- Including the Claremont area (targeting auto-oriented uses near Ashby and Domingo) creates new housing opportunities in one of Berkeley's highest resource neighborhoods, diversifying housing options and providing walkable retail access to residents.
- Infrastructure Alignment: The project aligns new development with the City's investment in the Telegraph Multimodal Corridors project, which includes bus lanes and a protected cycletrack to improve transit and cycling infrastructure.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

The project promotes environmental sustainability and climate action by increasing housing development along the high-frequency 6-Telegraph AC Transit bus route, which also features good access to jobs, shopping, and other urban amenities. This location encourages car-free or car-lite living and would serve to reduce the carbon footprint associated with auto use relative to housing in other areas of Berkeley and especially outside Berkeley.

Encouraging infill development also has the effect of reducing development pressure on agricultural and wildland areas, helping preserve them as natural and working lands.

Subsequent CEQA review will ensure all environmental impacts are fully assessed and, if necessary, mitigated before zoning changes are enacted.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

This referral represents the first step in a longer process that would involve substantial additional staff work, public engagement, subsequent Council input, environmental review, and subsequent Council votes to approve any rezoning and associated CEQA documentation.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

The project is made more fiscally viable by the immediate financial commitment from Councilmember Humbert's office. Subsequent fiscal impacts include increased property tax revenue from new housing development, increased sales tax revenue from more residents and subsequent foot traffic, and increased transit ridership on the 6-line, which will help AC Transit address its fiscal shortfall.

CONTACT PERSON

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[ATTACHMENTS](#)

[Attachment 1 Preliminary Buildout Analysis](#)

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Improving Corridor Upzoning in District 8

Telegraph Avenue is currently zoned C-C and allows for just 3 stories, mixed-use or fully residential. By continuing the C-T zone from the Southside Plan down Telegraph Avenue, District 8 would be making possible thousands of new housing units on a corridor with plentiful underutilized automotive land-use, office properties, drive-thrus, and parking lots, and with streets wide enough for homes taller than 4-6 stories. Telegraph is equal to College Ave. in state resource designation. North of Ashby is High Resource and south of Ashby is Highest Resource.

To estimate the housing unit capacity of a Telegraph Avenue re-zoning, assume 1,000 sqft units with first-floor commercial uses. If a building is 7 stories, then the housing capacity is 6 stories by the number of 1,000 sqft units that fit within the parcel. Telegraph Avenue has more space for much higher-density housing than is being proposed on all the corridors, and has high-density zoning that can be extended from the Southside Plan (C-T zone).

	College (Current D8 proposal)	Telegraph (Proposed)
Acreage	7 acres (only 1.9 acres likely to be developed)	20 acres
Zoned Housing Capacity	Proposed C-E up-zoning (only 130 units are expected, best case , on likely to be developed parcels.): 4-stories: 615 units 6-stories: 1,025 units	C-T Zoning (8 stories/FAR 8.0): 5,705 units

The gas station parcel on the northwest corner at Ashby and Telegraph alone fits 259 units, pre-density bonus, more than the best-case scenario for the entire proposed College Ave. rezoning.

In addition to adding Telegraph Avenue to the Corridors Plan and changing the Elmwood upzoning to a spot-zoning of the least sensitive lots without contingent commercial structures, the Claremont neighborhood has several car-oriented parcels ideal for new housing. Claremont is the Highest Resource neighborhood in Berkeley. Housing on the gas stations and auto shops in the C-N zone around Ashby and Domingo Avenue would provide future residents with walkable retail, a 5-minute walk to Star Grocery, and a local bus line.

The following is a comprehensive table of zoned capacity under the proposed changes to District 8 rezoning.

Location	Current Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Rationale	APN (if applicable)	Dwelling Unit Zoned Capacity
Telegraph Ave south of Parker Street	C-C 2-3 stories	C-T 85 feet (8 stories)	Good transit service, wide street, many suitable sites. 5 minute walk to Elmwood shopping district; Whole Foods, Berkeley Bowl within walking range.		8 stories w/ ground floor retail: 5,705 units
Claremont & Ashby: two gas stations, a car repair shop, and a parking lot	C-N 2-3 stories	4 - 6 stories (Same as Solano)	Creates new housing in the wealthiest district of Berkeley. 5 min. walk to Star Grocery. Domingo Ave. businesses next door. 12 minutes to BART by bus. Gas stations will be obsolete in the near future as the population continues shift to EVs.	'64-4234-3-3' '64-4235-8-4' '64-4236-4', '64-4236-2'	4 stories w/ ground floor retail: 159 units. 6 stories w/ ground floor retail: 265 units. 4 stories: 212 units 6 stories: 318 units.
Elmwood: 7-11 strip mall, Wells Fargo Lot, and Post Office	C-E 2-3 stories	4 - 6 stories (Same as Solano)	Rezone three parking lot parcels on College. Would allow building types such as senior or affordable housing, to be added to the Elmwood.	52-1567-62-6, 53-1696-15, 52-1567-16	4 stories w/ ground floor retail: 84 units. 6 stories w/ ground floor retail: 140 units.
Total Units Zoned Proposed					~6,100 units zoned

Current Plan (C-E)	C-E	4 - 6 stories	Entirety of College commercial re-zoned		615 - 1,025 units
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Additional Notes:

1. The Telegraph Multimodal Corridors project is investing in transportation for future population growth along Telegraph Ave.
2. SB 79 will likely require some rezoning of or near the west side of Telegraph Ave., via Ashby BART in District 3. This is an opportunity to rezone Telegraph comprehensively, rather than rely on the state and a portion of Telegraph and the LeConte neighborhood in District 3, only.