

San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

Berkeley Neighborhoods Council



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. 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”

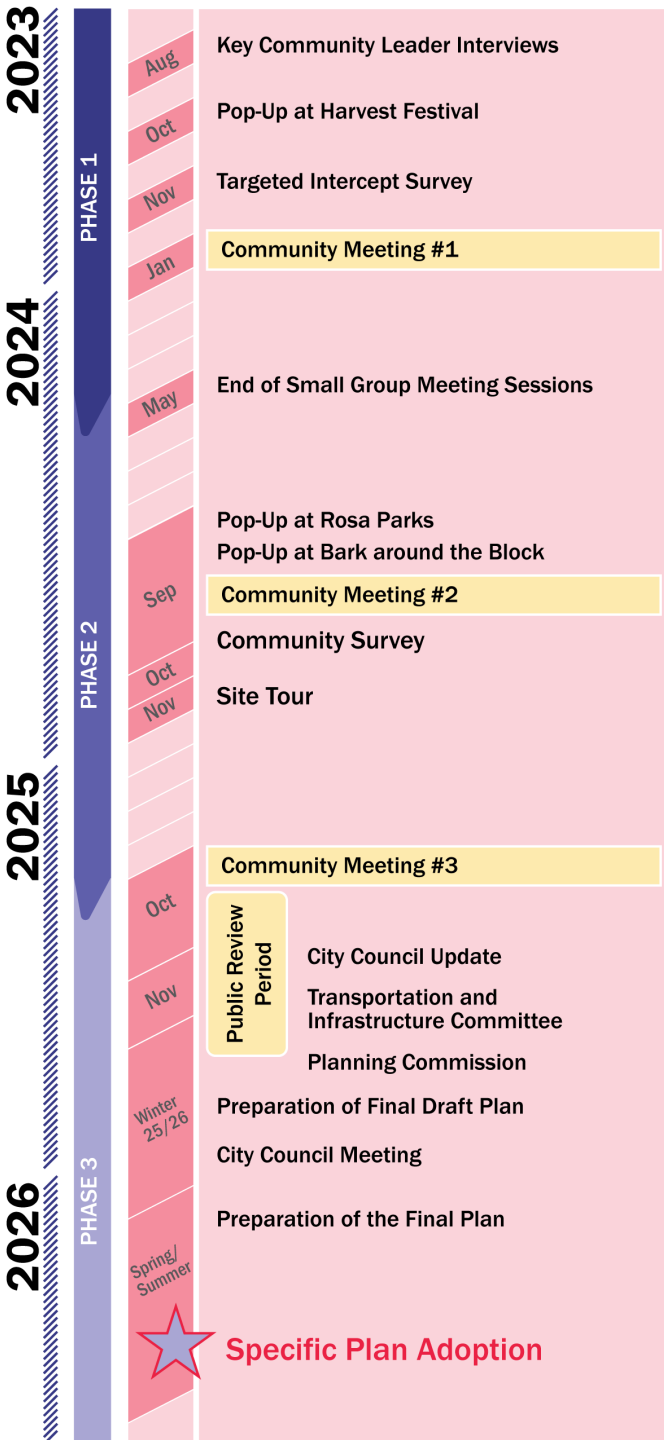
Specific Plan Boundary and Study Area

- 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

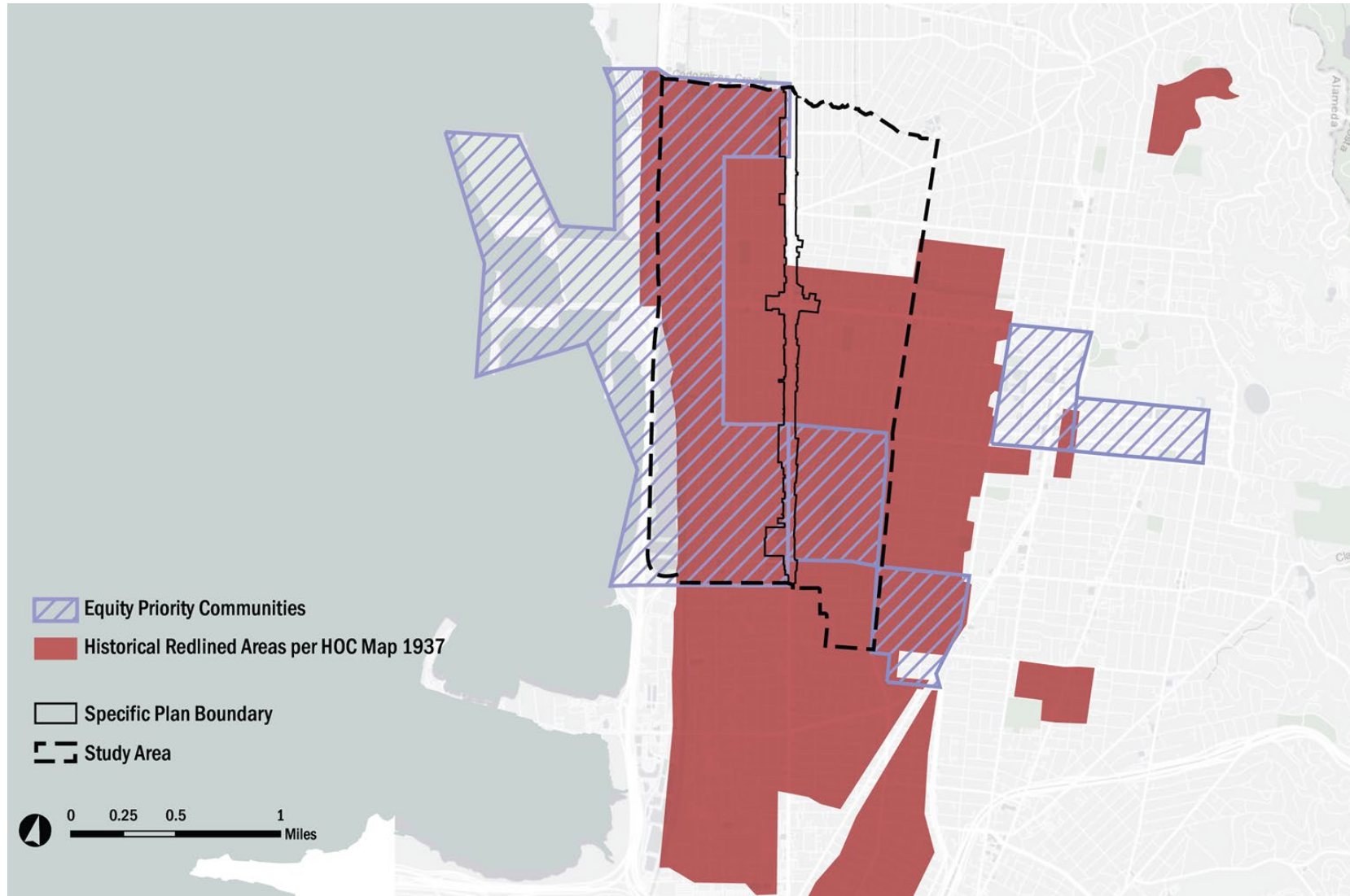


Community Engagement and Plan Development Process

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



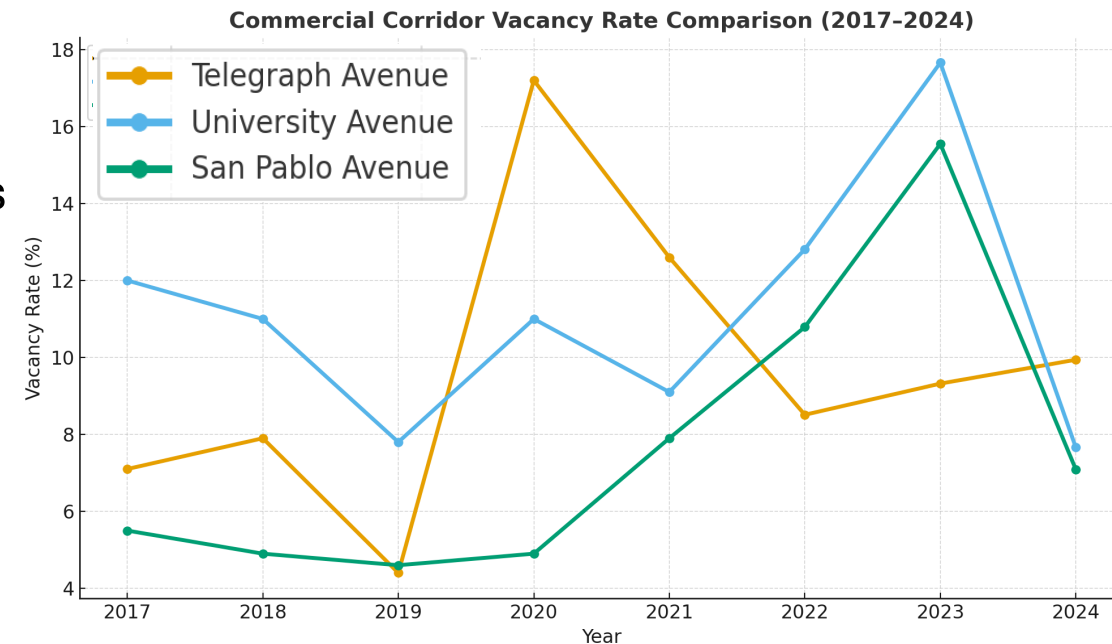
Demographics and Equity



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



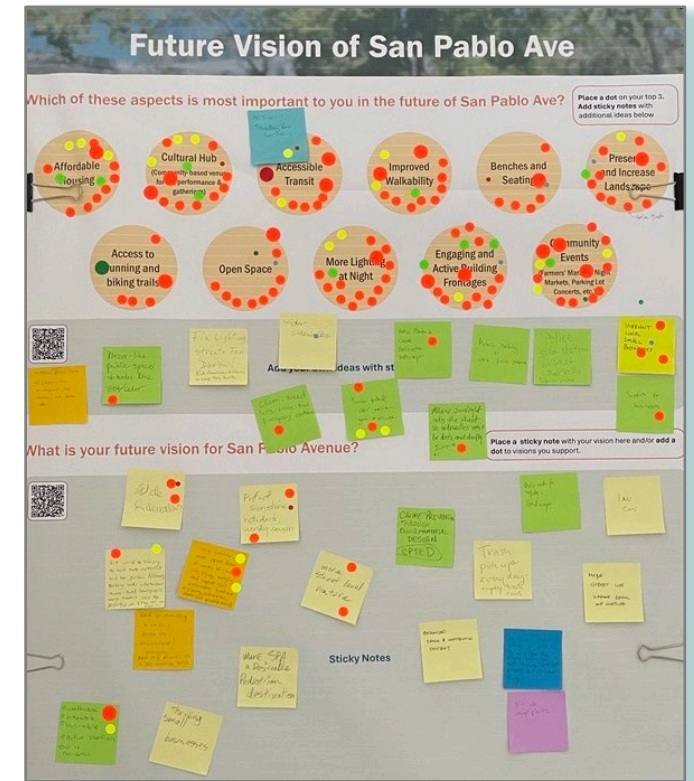
Mature London Plane trees define the character of San Pablo Ave



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

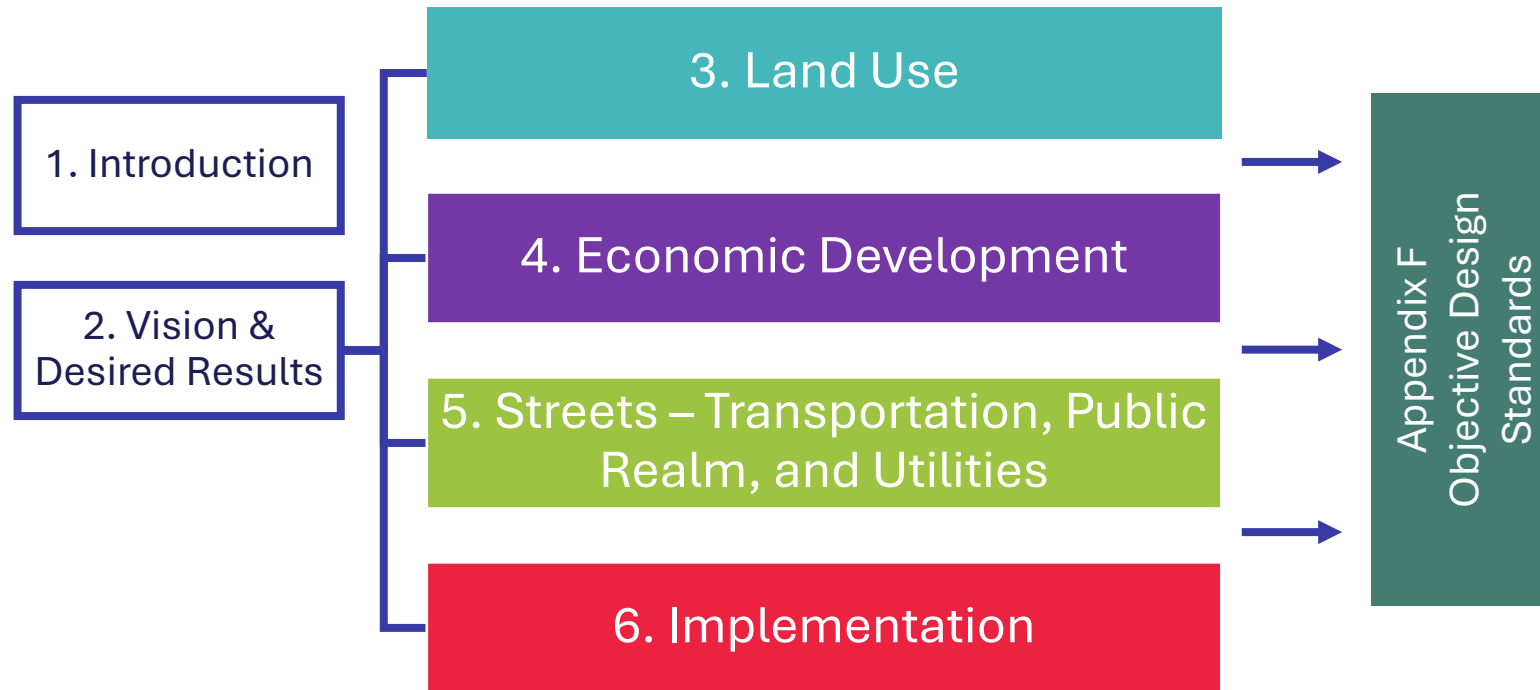


Enhanced Local and Citywide
Access

*“[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 chapter 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



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

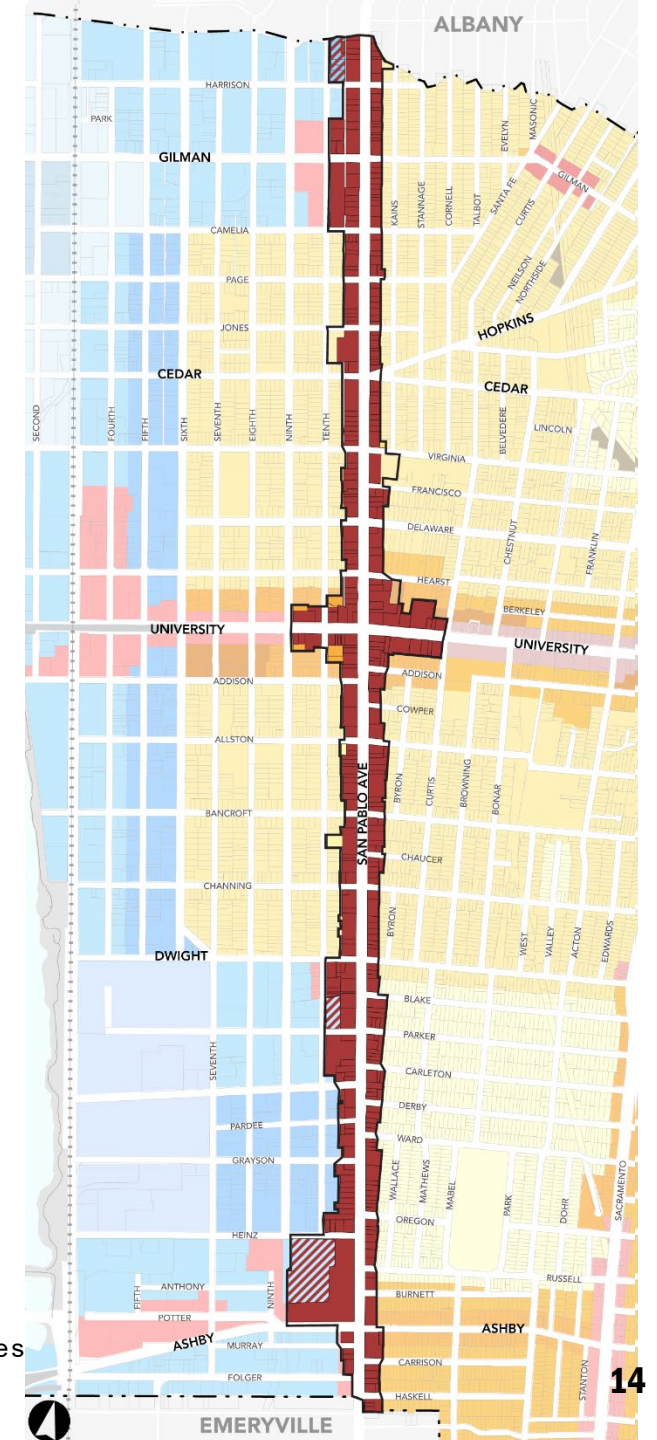


Zoning Changes

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

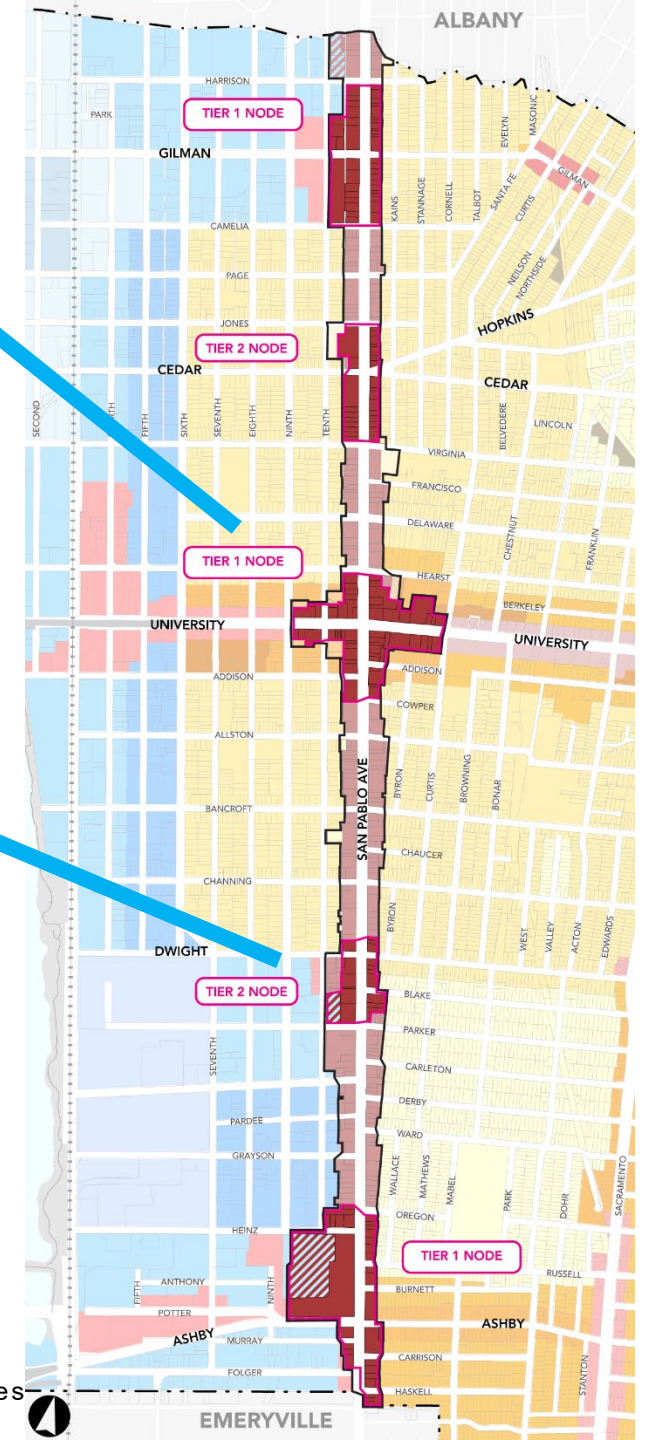
Tier 1: University, Gilman and Ashby

Tier 2:
Less Intensity

Tier 2: Cedar and Dwight

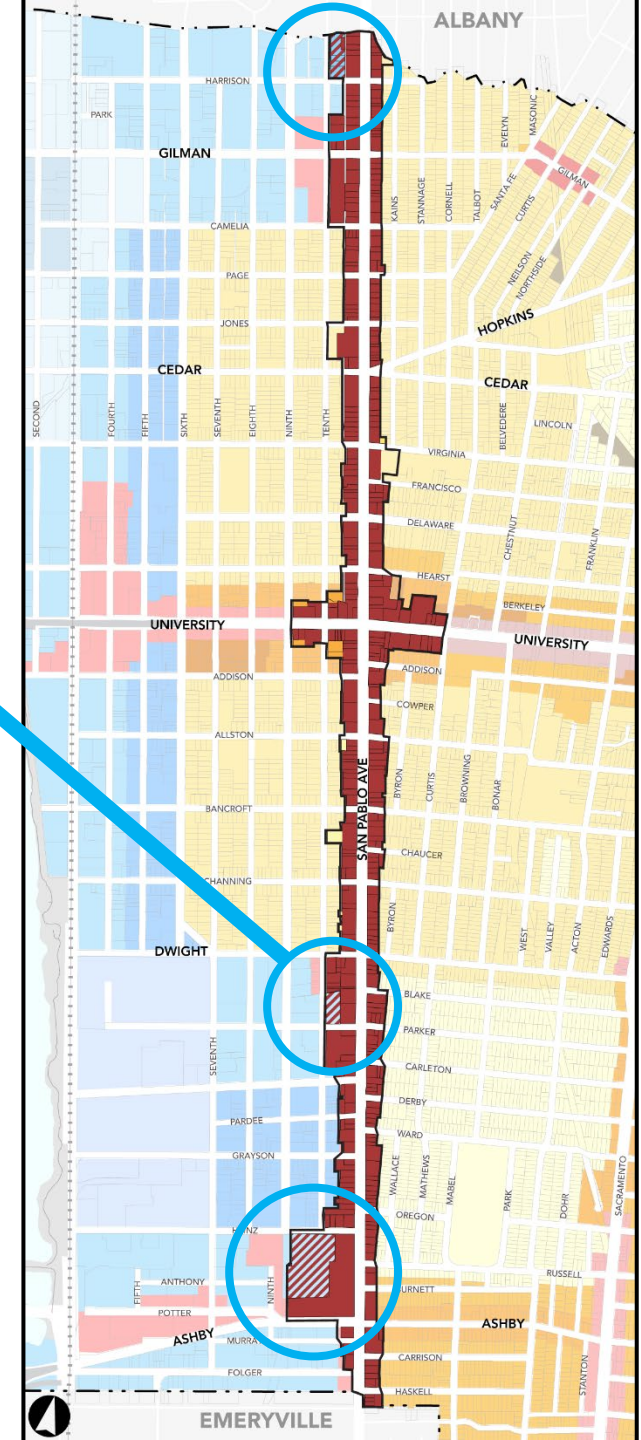
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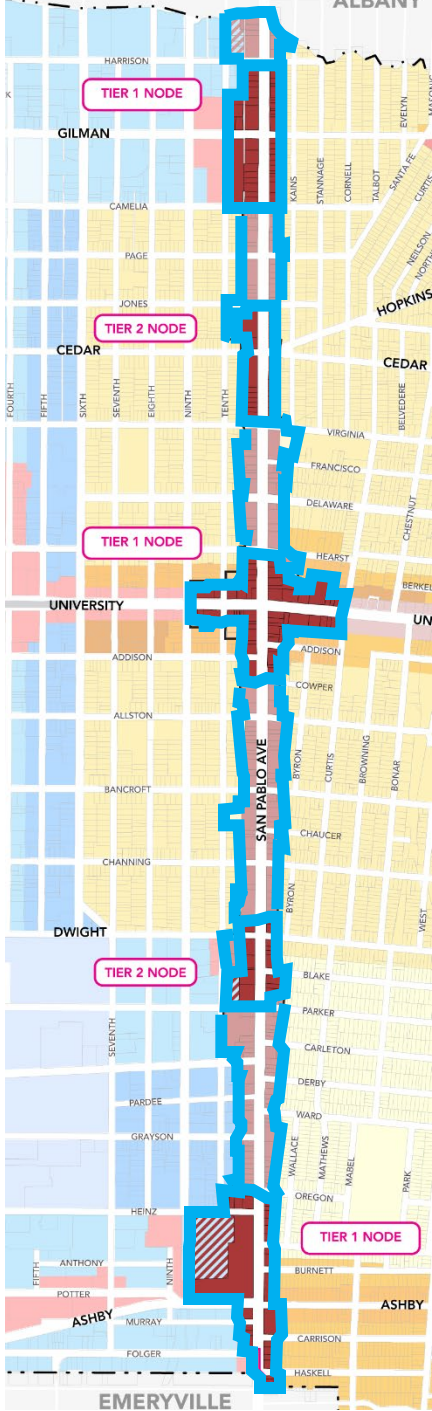
Zoning Changes

- 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
Max Height	40'	50'	40'	55'	40'	85'	65'
Max Stories	3	4	3	5	3	8	6
FAR	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	4.75	3.75
Usable Open Space <small>(only applies to residential uses)</small>	40 SF/Unit						
Lot Coverage	100%						



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*

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



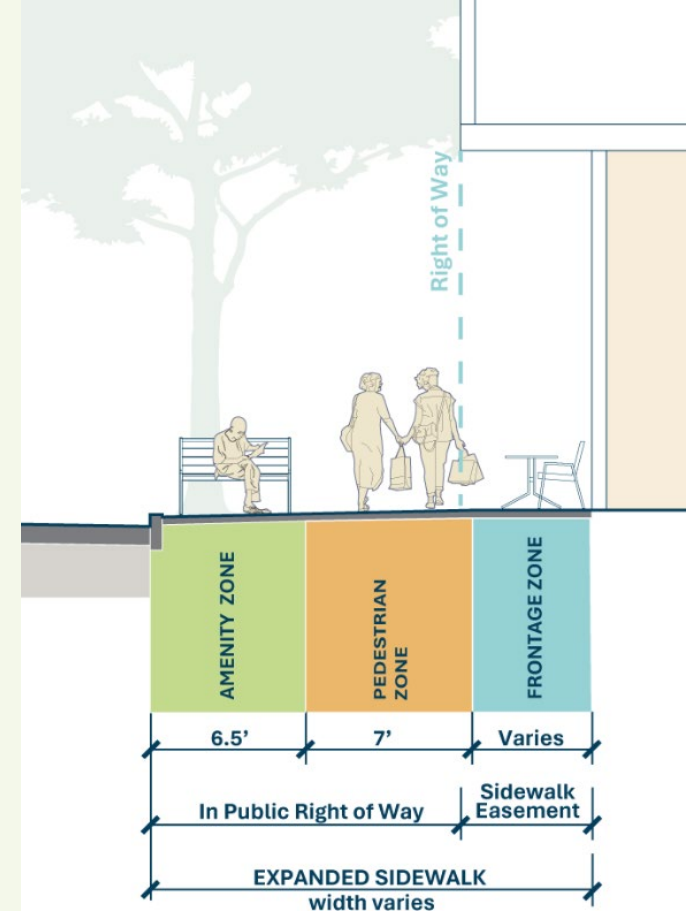
Enhanced Local and Citywide Access



Sidewalk Easements

Streetscape Standards

Public Space Incentives



Side Street Plazas

Safety and Speed Management

Improve Intersections and Connections



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)



Next Steps

- **Winter 2025/2026**
 - Public Review Draft is available on the Website for comments until January 9th
 - 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