

March 2016

### **Berkeley Downtown Traffic Plan(s)**

Many wonder who our downtown is for. If you walk around our downtown you see a lot of people going here and there. For the most part they are all young people, Berkeley High students, City College students or the homeless. The commuter hours are crowded with UCB students and staff walking from the BART station to the campus. During the evenings there are other kinds of people on the street. They are going to live theater or the movies. This of course is good business for the restaurants, but when you look around that is all that there is. As UCB buys up more of the downtown properties it will look for changes that will benefit their goals and ignore the rest of the citizen's needs. Because of this, the downtown has become a place of interest to many different groups, but not Berkeley residents.

Many Berkeley residents have given up on our downtown as a place to shop. They believe the only reason for going downtown is to go to the movie theaters, a play or a restaurant. Everyone knows that parking is an issue and getting worse as time goes on. With coming construction of large buildings in the downtown it will probably only get more difficult. The coming closure of the Shattuck movie theater will make the downtown even less attractive.

In 2015 the City Council voted to spend more money to continue redesigning the downtown traffic circulation plan as conceived by the Public Works Department. You can find the complete plan by going to [www.cityofberkeley.info](http://www.cityofberkeley.info), then to the Transportation Commission October 15, 2015 agenda.

The city's plan proposes to reduce the existing north bound traffic on the East side of Shattuck Avenue to a two lane street with angular parking on one side. On the West side of Shattuck the existing South bound lanes will be changed to two lanes in both directions with almost no parking. The University of California loves the proposed plan because it moves more traffic into the downtown and away from the campus.

If you have ever tried to drive through the downtown on a weekend evening you have experienced the traffic grid lock on Shattuck Avenue. The weekday mornings are less congested and the afternoons become more congested. The city's proposal will change all of that and is likely to make Shattuck Avenue in the downtown a place to avoid.

In 2006 Jurgen Aust submitted a plan for the downtown that includes turning the West side of Shattuck Avenue into a town square, tying it into the Arts District rather than separating the latter. It also includes a comprehensive transit and parking plan. Though Jurgen received an acknowledgment from Matthew Taecker (the then lead downtown planner) as setting forth "compelling ideas that will be considered", they have never ever been seriously explored.

Everyone who has seen the plan has been very enthused about it – except for elected officials and no wonder - during all of the meetings and time and multi millions of dollars spent on the downtown plan, the proposal has not been presented by the city staff to the public for discussion.

The plan would make the mess that exists today on the two blocks of West Shattuck a pleasant place to browse, shop, and walk to the Arts district as well as eat out at a downtown restaurant. The plan could be easily implemented and at a low cost.

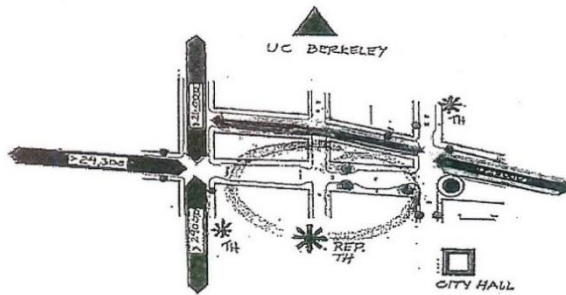
Following are images and drawings of different ideas on how to reconfigure the traffic in our downtown. The first five images are from the proposal made by Jurgen and the rest are taken from city documents.

## ~ BERKELEY TOWN SQUARE PROPOSAL ~

*THE PLACE TO GO – TO SEE AND BE SEEN*



Alt B: Short-term Parking



JURGEN AUST, AICP: City Planning & Urban Design  
510.540.5481 – [jurgen.aust@bhghome.com](mailto:jurgen.aust@bhghome.com)



BERKELEY TOWN SQUARE PROPOSAL

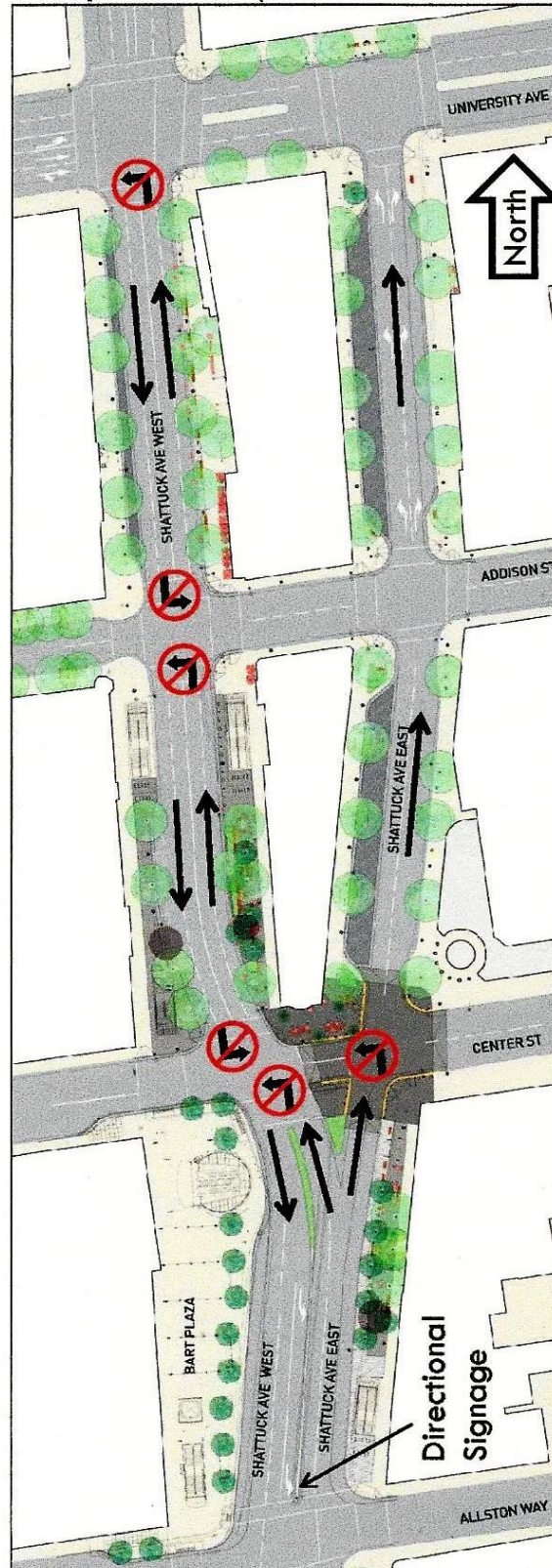
Like & Share it on 

This plan was submitted but never presented to the public for discussion.





**Figure 1. Proposed Plan** (also see Attachments 1 and 2)



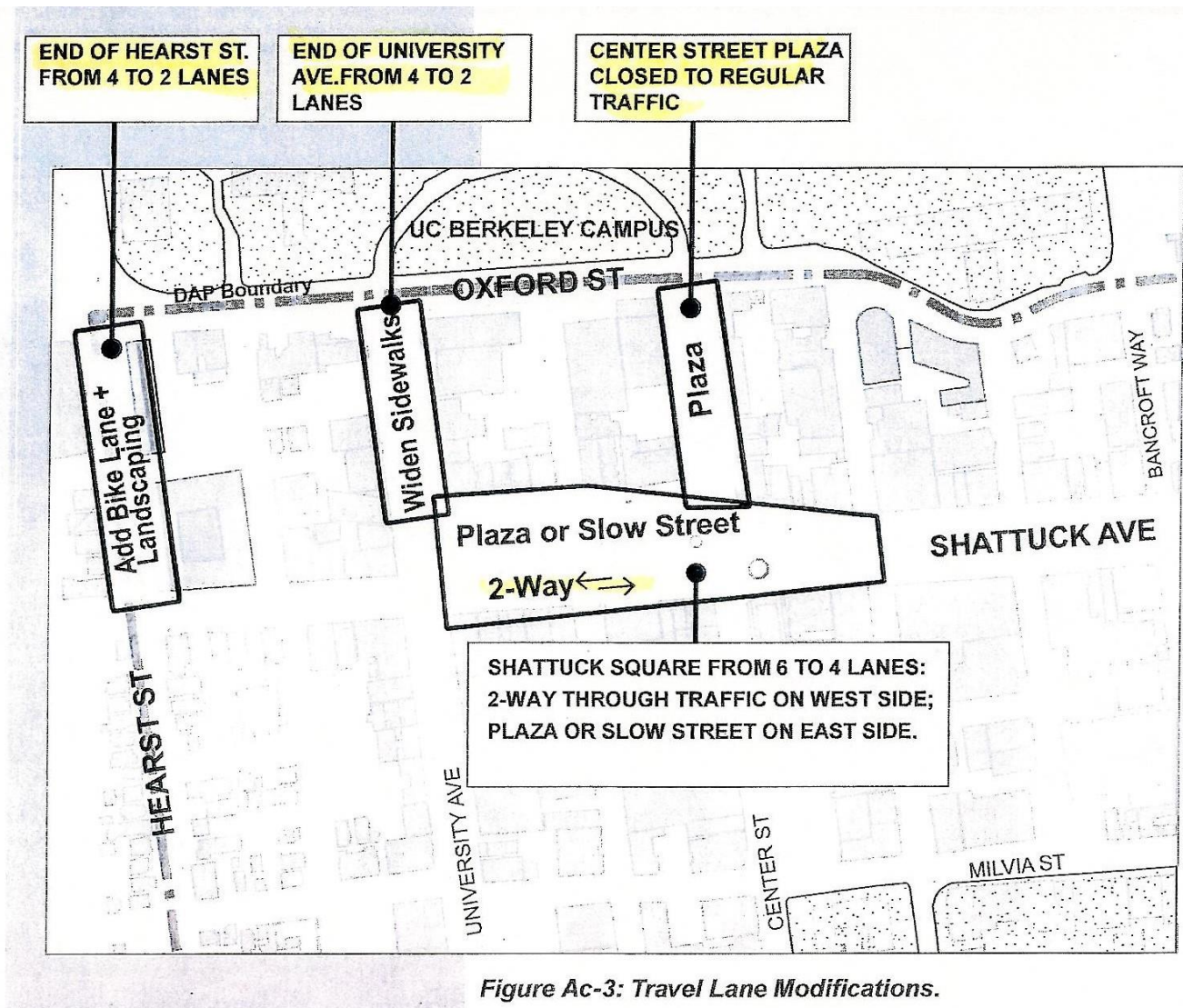
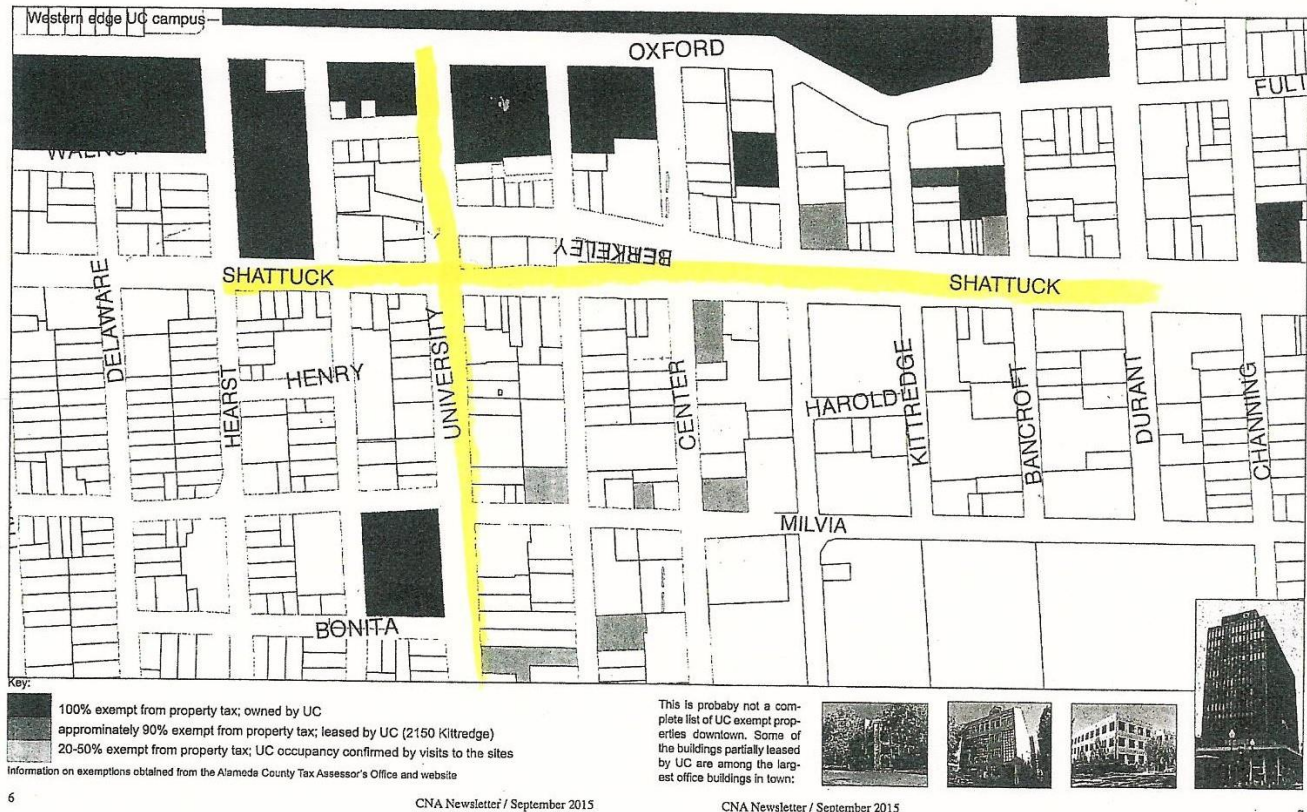


Figure Ac-3: Travel Lane Modifications.

This proposal is one of many that had been considered.



Property Tax Exemptions for Downtown Sites Owned or Leased by UC



The University of California owns the properties shown above. The problem is that these properties no longer pay taxes to help the city maintain its infrastructure nor does the University pay its fair share to help with the city services it uses.

As the city proceeds with planning for the transition of our downtown we need to make our voices heard. If we don't, the downtown will continue to be a place that most of the city's residents will avoid.

Jurgen Aust

