

San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan: *Draft Framework & Policies* *Urban Design*

June 23, 2021

City of Albany
Planning & Zoning Commission Study Session

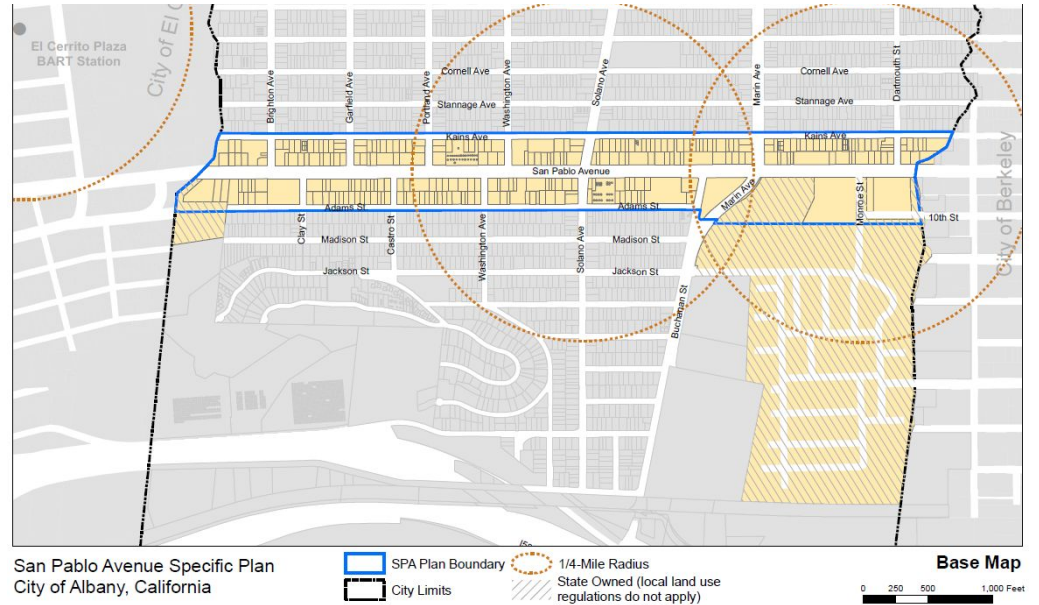
Lexington Planning and Urban Field Studio



Agenda

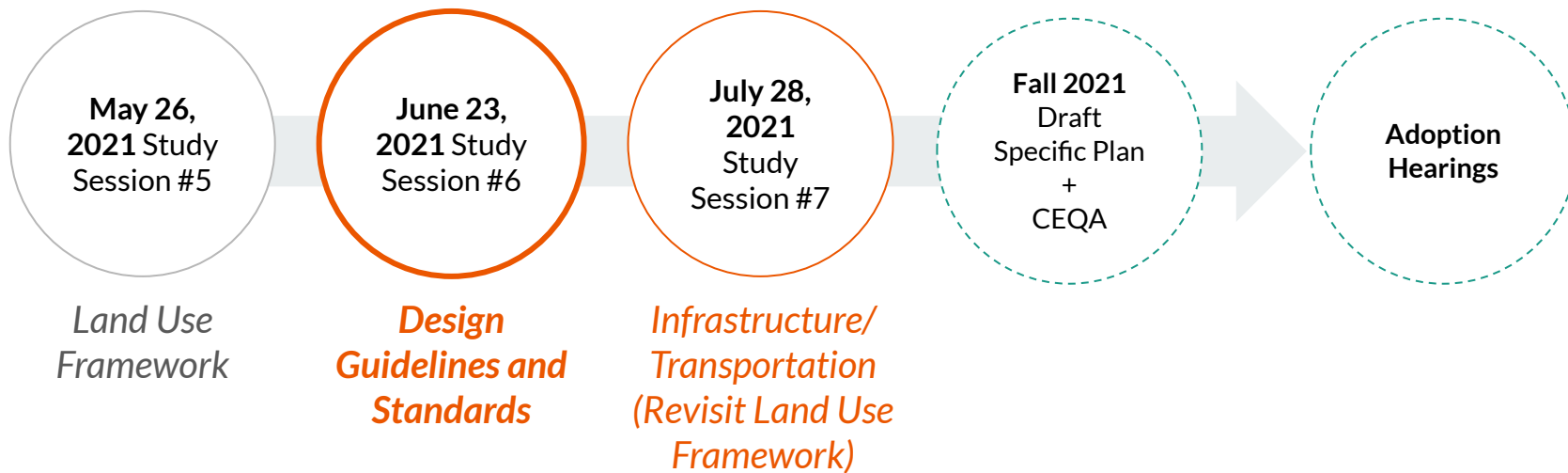
- 1) Existing Policy Context
- 2) **Overarching Guiding Principles**
- 3) Design Guidelines and Standards
- 4) Discussion

www.sanpablospecificplan.org



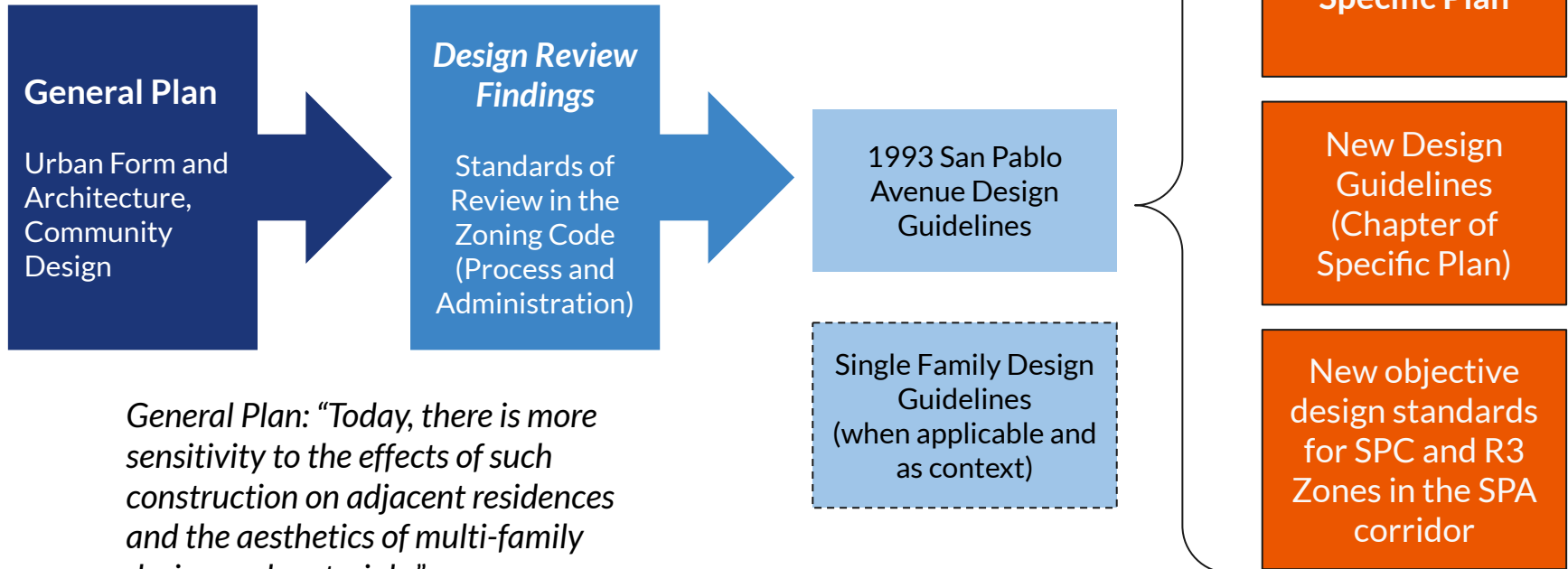
Project Next Steps

Draft San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Components



Design Guidelines and Standards Planning Document Overview

Urban Design Planning Documents



General Plan: "Today, there is more sensitivity to the effects of such construction on adjacent residences and the aesthetics of multi-family design and materials."

General Plan Land Use Element: Urban Design and Community Design

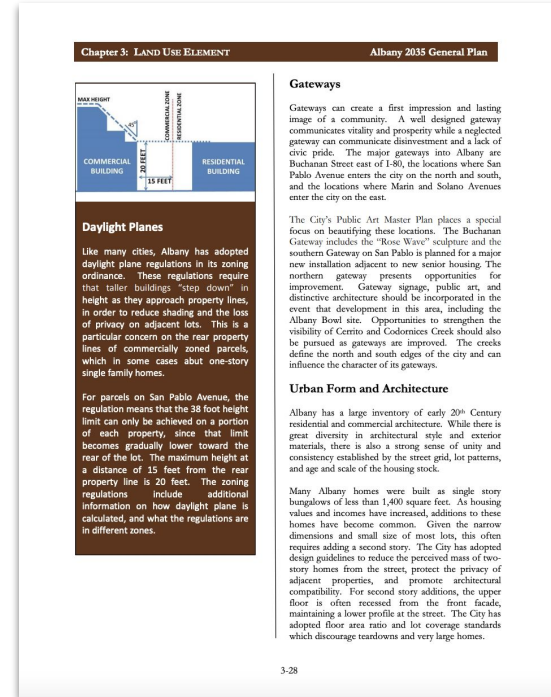
Highlighted Policies

Focus Areas

- San Pablo Avenue Corridor

Community Design and Preservation

- Pedestrian-oriented mixed use transformation
- Sense of place
- Gateways and nodes
- Urban form and architecture
- Urban open space
- Buffering residential uses



Complete Streets Study

San Pablo Avenue and Buchanan St

- Community design workshops held December 2012
- Complete Streets Study adopted December 2013



Option 3 Section for shared lane markings from Clay Avenue to Buchanan Street.

Recommended design provides space for **wide raised medians** wherever possible; retains center turn lanes where needed; **retains parking** where demand is high; and **provides bike lanes** in some areas.

San Pablo at Solano Avenue



Overall Plan between Solano and Marin Ave.

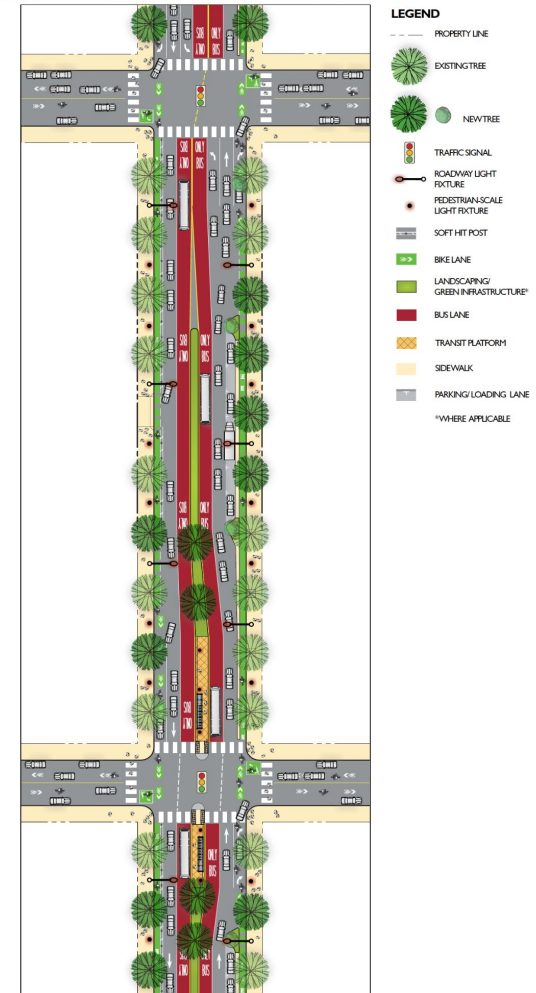


San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project

(ACTC - Alameda County Transportation Commission)

- **Phase 1:** identifying and refining potential long-term concepts for the corridor through extensive outreach and technical analysis concluded in summer 2020
- No single long-term vision emerged at the end of Phase 1 and multiple project alternatives are still being considered for the long-term improvement of the corridor
 - Outreach and engagement revealed support for **Concept A (pictured): Bus and Bike Lanes on San Pablo** and **Concept B: Bus and Managed Lane on San Pablo, Bike on Parallel Facility**
- Beginning in Fall 2020, **Phase 2** focuses on advancing more incremental near-term improvements seeking to improve safety and learn more about the effectiveness of different treatments

Concept A: Bus and Bike Lanes on San Pablo



City of Albany Design Guidelines for Single Family Residential (2018)

City of Albany

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL ADDITIONS, ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS AND NEW HOMES



Community Development Department
1000 San Pablo Avenue
Albany, CA 94706
(510) 528-5760
www.albanyca.org



FINAL ADOPTED GUIDELINES
Albany City Council
2/20/2018

The 7 Principles

- Landscape Design
- Outdoor Space
- Architectural Design
- Livability
- Context
- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Parking

Architectural Character

Contemporary Design

Before and After Photos

Exceptional Design

Design Review Findings (AMC 20.100.050, A, D, E)

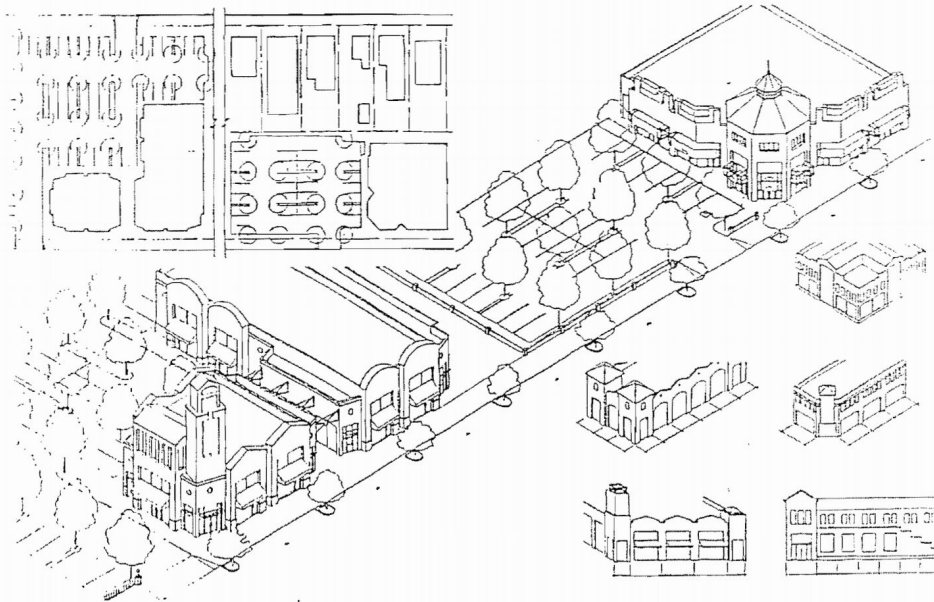
Standards of Review

- Site Planning
- Access
- Architecture
- Landscape Design
- Natural Features
- Signs
- Coordination of Design Details
- Retention and Maintenance of Buildings
- Solid Waste
- Privacy

Exceptions

The Planning and Zoning Commission may grant exceptions to the criteria for **special circumstances** or **superior level of design**, as long as the overall purposes of the guidelines are achieved.

San Pablo Avenue Design Guidelines (1993)



Retail Boulevard Buildings - Composite

Objective 1: Create a “Retail Boulevard” that reflects the quality of Albany

Objective 2: Define the Solano Avenue Intersection as the center of an Identifiable Commercial Street

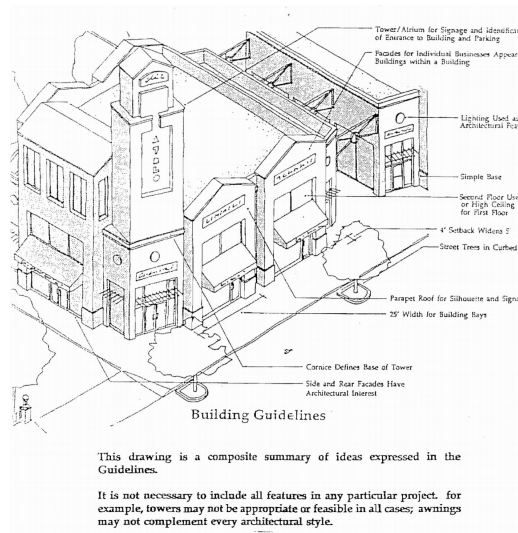
Objective 3: Encourage private development create special locations and features along the street

“Building as Sign” The formula for the Retail Boulevard can be reduced to “more architecture, less signage” (San Pablo Avenue Urban Design Plan)

San Pablo Avenue Design Guidelines (1993)

What is out of date?

1. Subjective
 - a. “Expressive silhouette”
 - b. “Massing should be exuberant”
 - c. “Color should be lively and attractive”
2. Not how retail is designed anymore
 - a. Towers, turrets
 - b. Corner entrances
3. Assumes consistency on San Pablo Avenue, which is eclectic
4. Does not take into account larger scale of development that is anticipated for the corridor, nor mixed-use and multi-modal



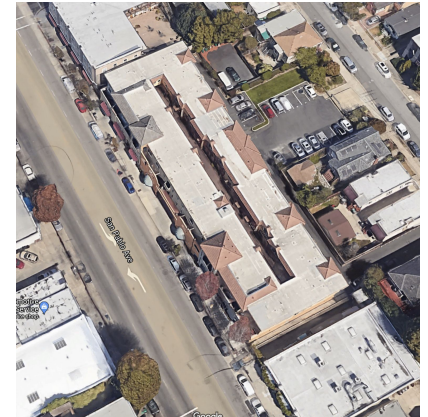
What is Good?

1. Guidelines do not dictate a particular architectural style
2. Recognized that parking requirements are really high
3. Taller building masses should be closest to the street and parking should be behind
4. Massing should be used to organize an overall building composition
5. Pedestrian Detail
6. Lighting and Signage
7. Service Areas should not be visible

727 San Pablo

"Villa de Albany"

- Extremely narrow podium-top courtyard space
- Driveway entrance is the most prominent
- Narrow front balconies
- Ground Floor Retail is an afterthought



914/916 San Pablo

- Not how buildings are designed today
- Uninviting ground floor retail
- Faux divided light windows
- Beige
- Boxy and flat looking
- Rooftop utilities are visible
- Alleyway is not open space
- 4th floor setback has open space



Overarching Guiding Principles

Design Principles

1. Mixed-use Urban Boulevard
2. Ground Floor Pedestrian Environment
3. Public Realm
4. Transitions
5. Neighborhood Street Character
6. Architectural Variation and Innovation

Design Principle 1: Mixed-use Urban Boulevard

Transition San Pablo Avenue from a car-oriented commercial-retail focused environment to a **walkable, transit-oriented, mixed-use boulevard** with multi-family housing. This will mean a transition to taller buildings, higher density housing types, and an **urban boulevard character** especially at node locations.

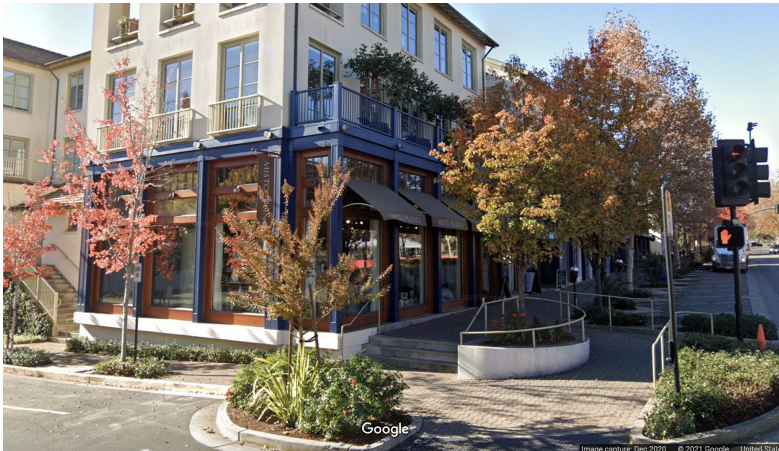
How do we achieve our design goals?

- Urban Boulevard Character
- Design for Multi-family and Mixed use buildings
- Definition of Nodes

How can design distinguish nodes from other parts of San Pablo Avenue?

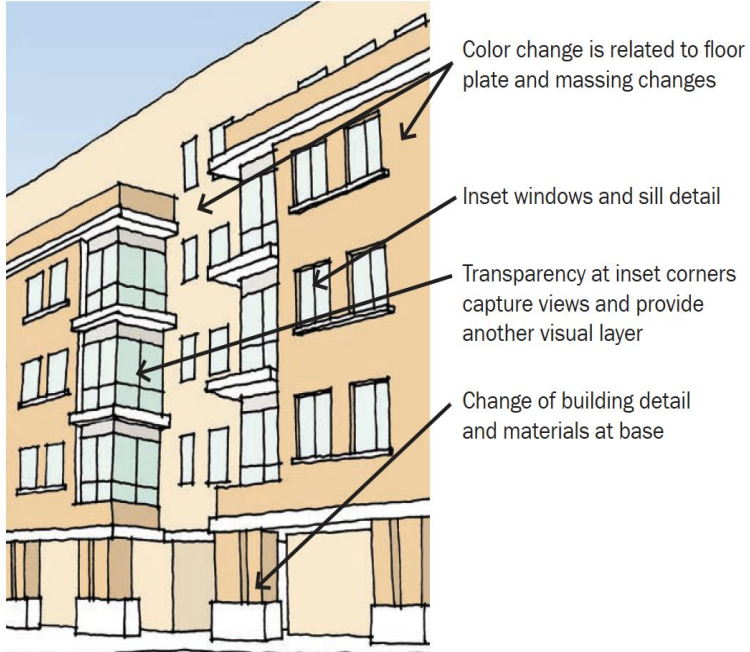
What have we heard?

“High residential density, amenities within short distance and pedestrian friendly spaces are all key to having a corridor where people want to be”

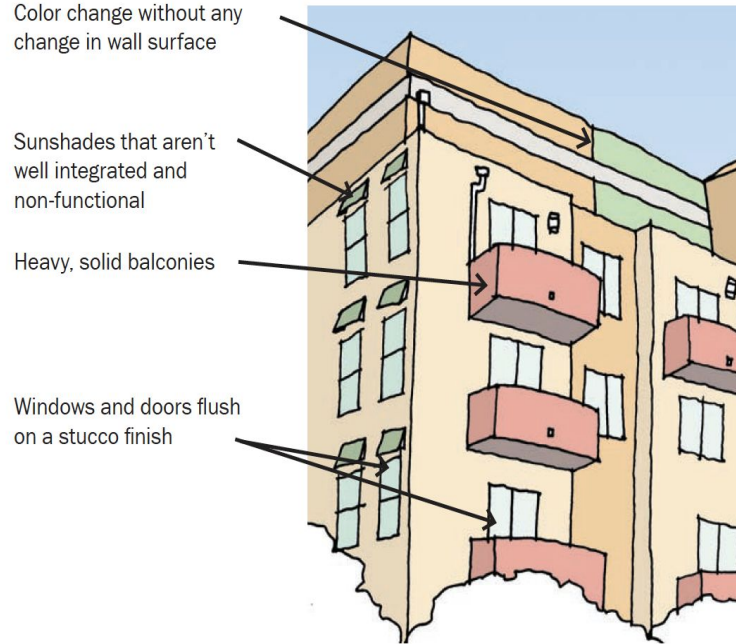


Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette

Layering. A building's skin should be layered and bear a direct relationship to the building's structural elements.



Bad example of a building with poor variation, materials and detail choices.



Architectural detail- *Los Angeles Downtown Design Guidelines (2009)*

Node Overlay Zones with SPC Through Lots

East Side of San Pablo and
Solano



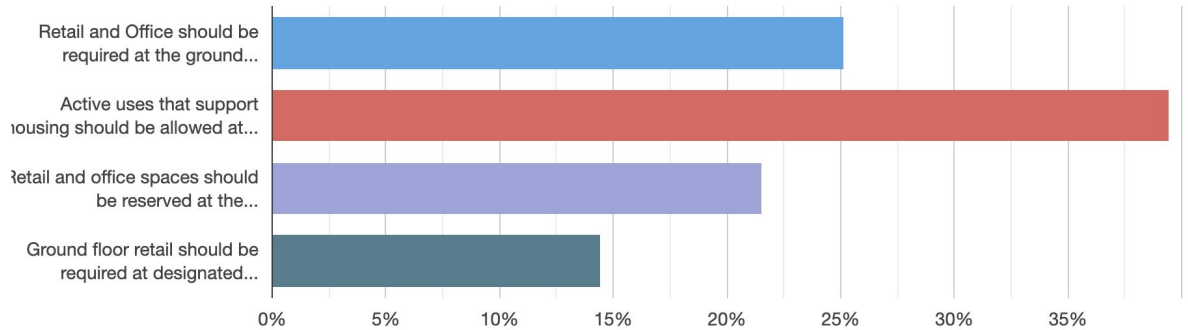
Design Principle 2: Ground Floor Walkable Environment

Create a compact, walkable neighborhood that is well-served by and supportive of transit, cycling, and pedestrians with neighborhood conveniences, and enough activity to make the walking experience as attractive as possible.

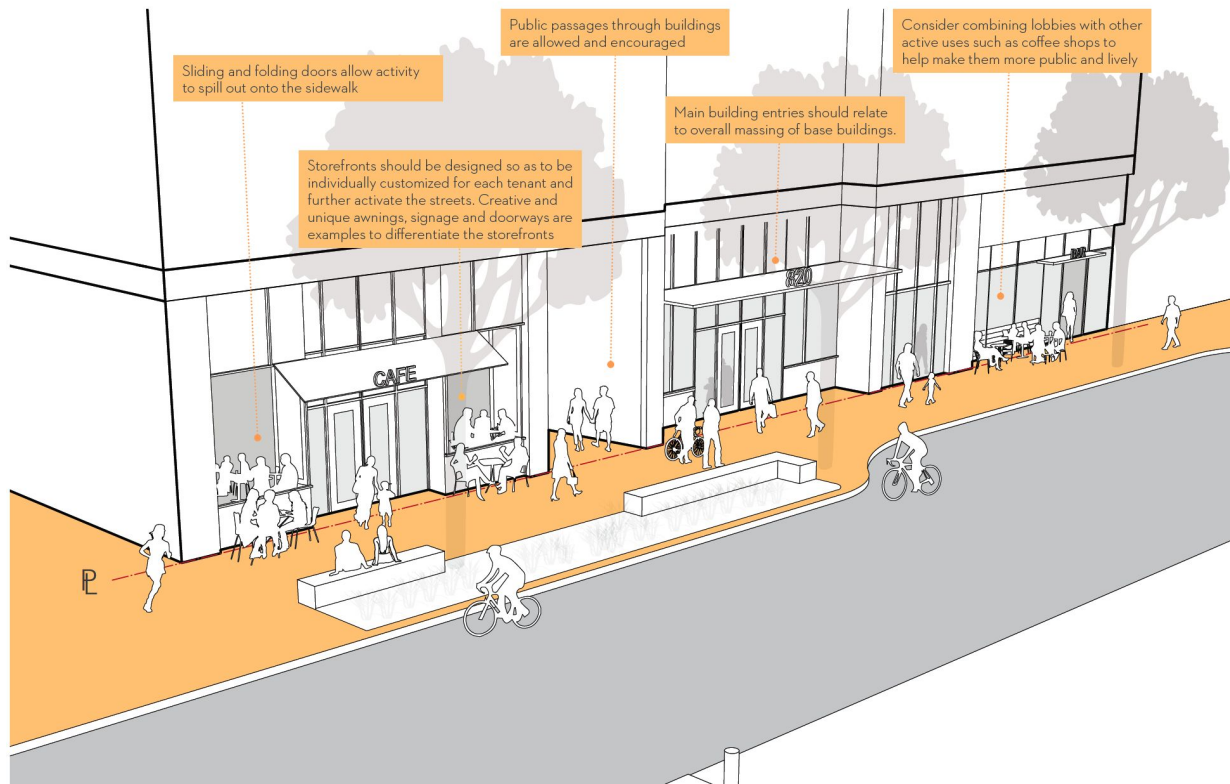
How do we achieve our design goals?

- Ground floor commercial design
- Ground floor residential design
- Landscaping
- Sidewalk Design

Where should ground floor commercial (retail and office) be required on San Pablo Avenue?



How can we create a well-designed ground floor pedestrian environment?



Neighborhood Street Zone: Non-residential - *Mission Rock Design Controls (2017)*



Active edges



Ground floor active uses

Design Principle 3: Public Realm

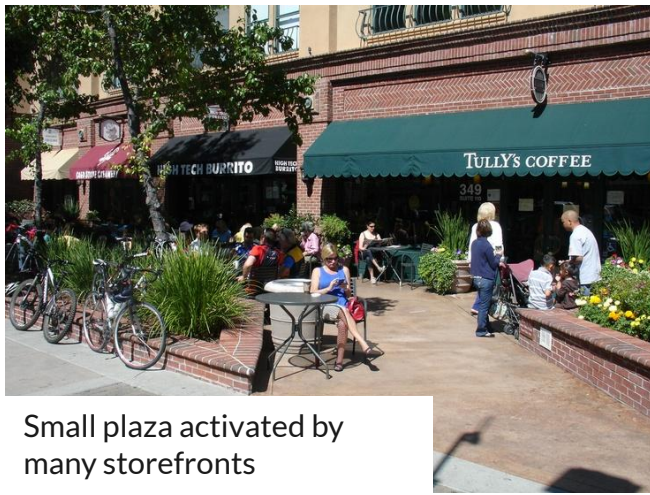
Support activity along San Pablo Avenue by filling in gaps with new development, placing active uses at the ground level, adding new public spaces, amenities, and extensions of the public realm to **encourage social interaction.**

Question: What types of open space and public realm improvements are appropriate?

How do we achieve our design goals?

- Orientation of shared entrances toward San Pablo Avenue
- Flexible design of the sidewalk
- Public open spaces along San Pablo Avenue
- Placemaking enhancements
- Public art
- Opportunities for gathering

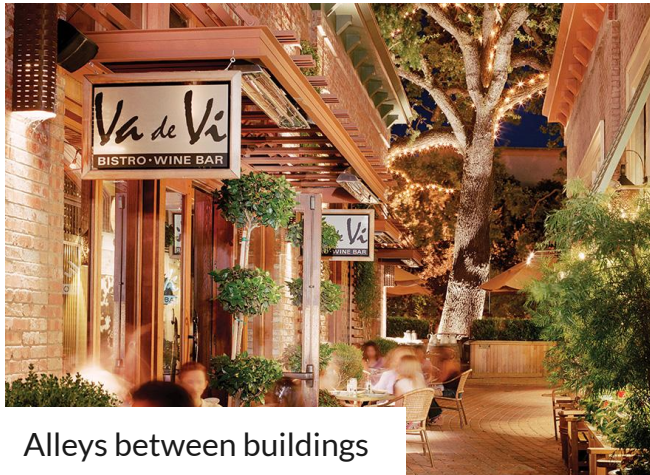




Small plaza activated by many storefronts



Internal gathering spaces



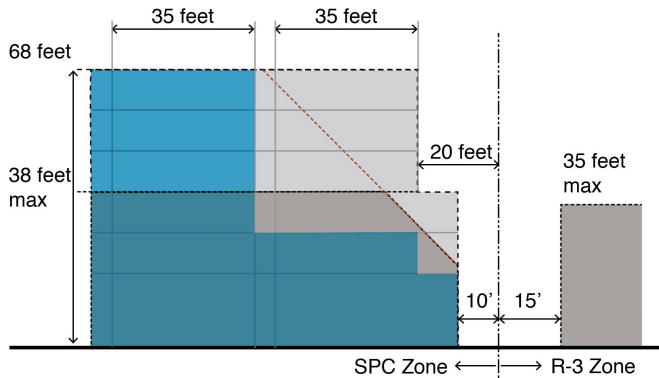
Alleys between buildings



Alleyways behind buildings

Design Principle 4: Transitions

Design thoughtful transitions between larger buildings and neighboring smaller buildings, keeping in mind privacy and access to the natural environment;



Rear setback with daylight plane compared to setback

How do we achieve our design goals?

- Window design
- Balcony design
- Stepbacks
- Roof form
- Open space on upper levels

How can building design assist transitions between smaller and taller buildings?

What have we heard?

“The new apartments on San Pablo Ave in Berkeley and El Cerrito show how interior open space can be included for residents and that step-backs reduce the scale of the buildings so they don't feel so daunting.”

Side Yard Transitions

“The Higby”
San Pablo x Ashby, Berkeley



“The Baxter”
51st and Broadway (south)



“Merrill Gardens”
51st and Broadway
(north)



4700 Telegraph
Temescal, Oakland





Rear Yard Transitions

“The Bloom” San Pablo x Grayson, Berkeley



“Breland” San Pablo x Parker, Berkeley



Visible blank rear wall



Balconies prohibited below 3 stories?



Designed facade of rear wall



Rear Yard Transitions

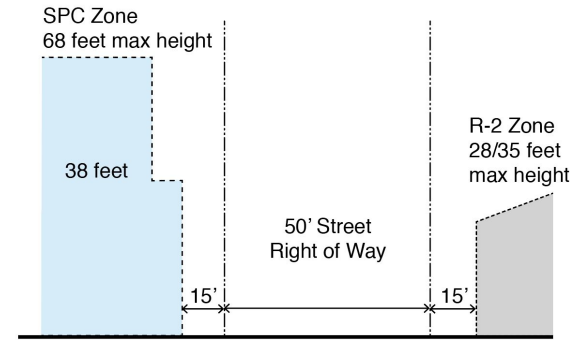
Design Principle 5: Neighborhood Street Character

Maintain a neighborhood scale on parallel streets to San Pablo Avenue. The character of Adams Street and Kains Street, the closest parallel streets to San Pablo Avenue, are narrower residential streets and distinct from San Pablo Avenue.

How do we achieve our design goals?

- Individual Residential Entrances
- Landscaping
- Design to emphasize pedestrian scale of the ground floor base

How can design address neighborhood street character?



Where SPC-zones are located across the street from R-3, R-2, or other residential zones.

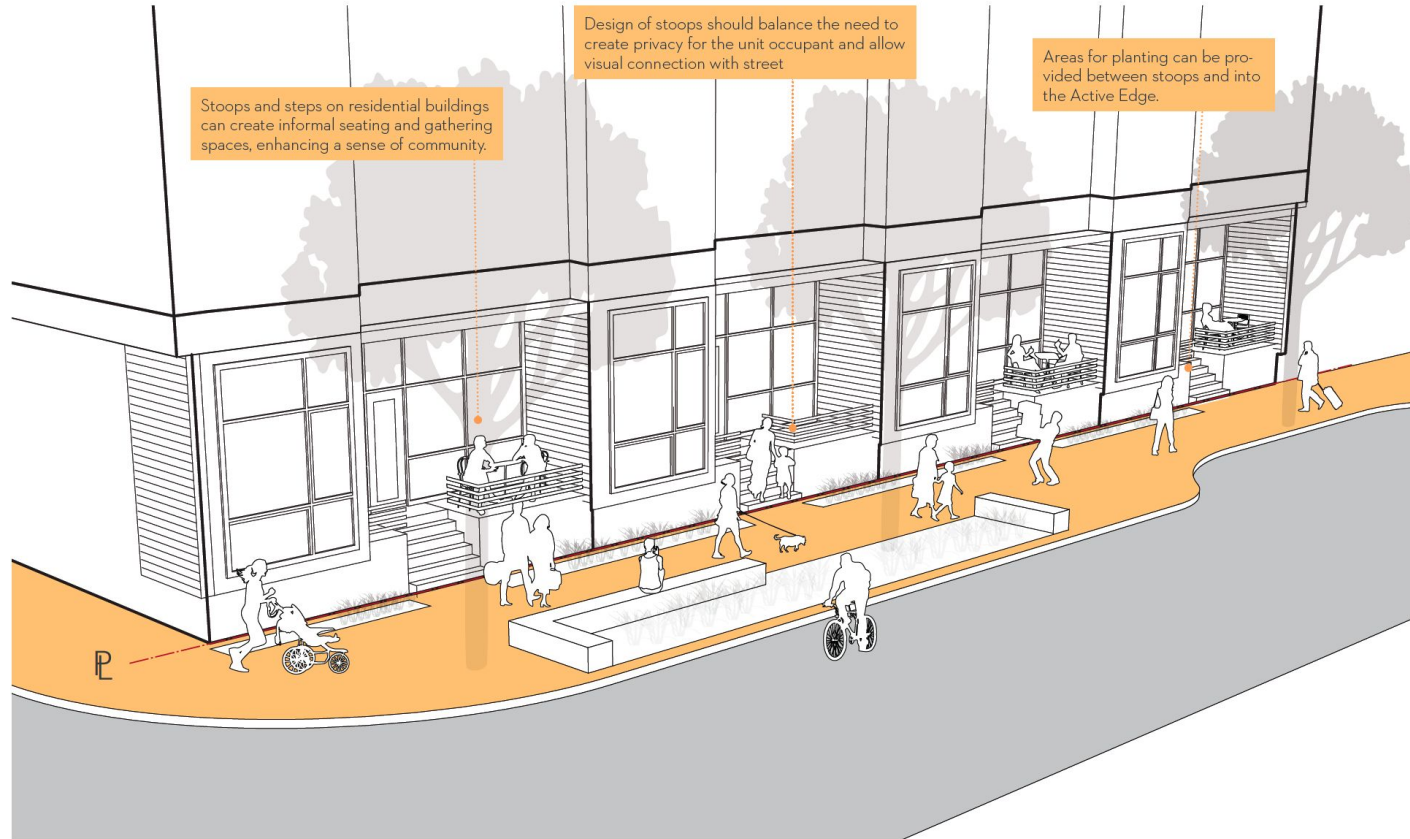
Street view on Adams and Kains between Solano and Brighton



Adams St



Kains St



Neighborhood Street Zone: Residential - *Mission Rock Design Controls (2017)*



Successful



Unsuccessful



“The Logan” Temescal



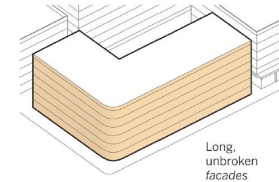
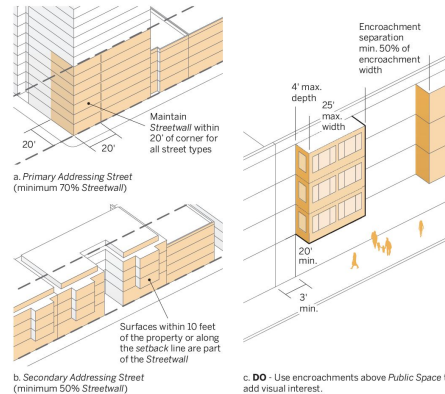
Design Principle 6: Design Variety

Allow variation for architectural expression without dictating a particular architectural style, and encourage memorable, attractive, and identifiable design to renew the character of San Pablo Avenue where landmarks are the buildings themselves.

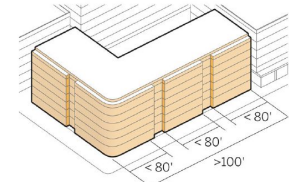
How do we allow for innovation and creativity and provide flexibility for the future?

What have we heard?

“Please focus on the design appearance of buildings. Albany is so fortunate to have a special, small village charm.”



a. **DO NOT** create a long building that breaks the human scale rhythm of the street.



b. **DO** - Divide a building over 100' in width with breaks in massing and architectural articulation.

How much
creative license?
How
prescriptive?



2503 Haste Street, Berkeley
“The Enclave”



Pictured for “Why America’s New Apartment Buildings All Look the Same”

Design Guidelines and Standards: Building Design

Design Principle



Design Guidelines
(Establishes
Design Intent)



Design Standard
(Objective
Requirement)

Site Design

Building Design

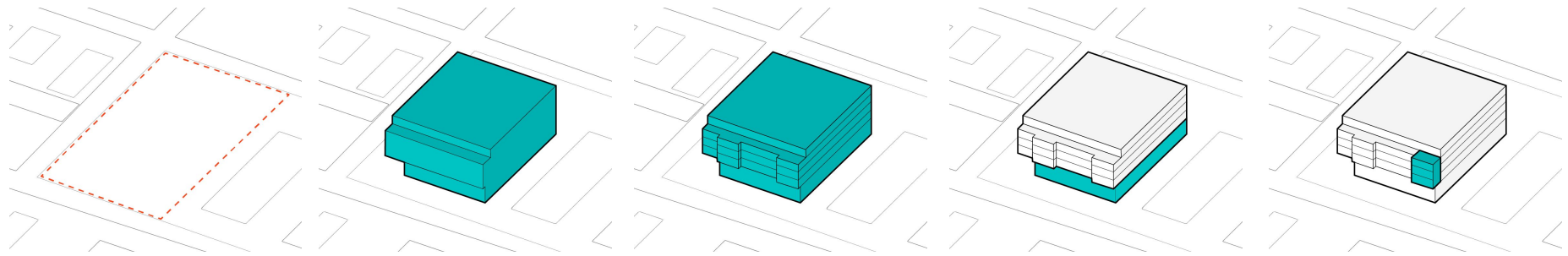
Building Orientation
Access
Landscape Design
Open Space

Massing and
Form

Facade
Articulation

Ground
Floor

Housing
Design



Questions for PCZ

1. Principles
2. Specific Design Details

Do you support
the draft urban
design guiding
principles?

Any
recommended
changes?

Draft Guiding Design Principles

1. **Mixed Use Boulevard.** Transition San Pablo Avenue from a car-oriented commercial-retail focused environment to a walkable, transit-oriented, mixed-use boulevard with multi-family housing. This will mean a transition to taller buildings, higher density housing types, and an urban boulevard character especially at node locations.
2. **Ground Floor Pedestrian Environment.** Create a compact, walkable neighborhood that is well-served by and supportive of transit, cycling, and pedestrians with neighborhood conveniences, and enough activity to make the walking experience as attractive as possible.
3. **Public Realm.** Support activity along San Pablo Avenue by filling in gaps with new development, placing active uses at the ground level, adding new public spaces, amenities, and extensions of the public realm to encourage social interaction.
4. **Transitions.** Design thoughtful transitions between larger buildings and neighboring smaller buildings, keeping in mind privacy and access to the natural environment.
5. **Neighborhood Street Character.** Maintain a neighborhood scale on parallel streets to San Pablo Avenue. The character of Adams Street and Kains Street, the closest parallel streets to San Pablo Avenue, are narrower residential streets and distinct from San Pablo Avenue.
6. **Design Variety.** Allow variation for architectural expression without dictating a particular architectural style, and encourage memorable, attractive, and identifiable design to renew the character of San Pablo Avenue where landmarks are the buildings themselves.

Specific Design Details

Prescriptive design guidelines and standards?

- Materials
- Windows
- Form
- Treatments
- Other?

Nodes

Would you like to see nodes distinguished from other parts of San Pablo Avenue?

- Major Activity Node

Open Space

What types of open spaces and public realm improvements are appropriate for San Pablo Avenue?

- Street Trees
- Green Space
- Seating Areas

Street Character

How can design address neighborhood street character?

- Windows
- Signage
- Lighting