



San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

June 2022



Land Acknowledgment

The City of Albany recognizes that we occupy the land originally protected by the **Confederated Villages of Lisjan**. We acknowledge the genocide that took place on these lands and must make strides to repay the moral debt that is owed to this indigenous people, specifically the Ohlone Tribe. We thank them for their contributions which have transformed our community, and will continue to bring forth growth and unity. The City of Albany commits to sustaining ongoing relationships with the Tribe and together build a better future for all that now make this their home.

Plan Acknowledgments

Grant Funding

California Department of Housing and Community Development

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Illustration of potential future development on San Pablo Avenue viewed from the intersection with Garfield Avenue, looking South.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Contents:

- Purpose and Overview
- Plan Boundaries
- Planning Context
- Relationship to Other Adopted Policies & Plans
- Statutory Requirements
- Community Outreach
- Plan Organization and Structure

Purpose and Overview

This Specific Plan facilitates the transformation of San Pablo Avenue from an auto-oriented commercial corridor to a place that also supports residential mixed-use development and safe convenient facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. It modifies development standards to facilitate new housing and establishes new policies to support vibrant active places for gathering and commerce. Through housing choices, opportunities for rental and ownership housing, and affordable housing development, the plan supports racial equity and economic diversity in Albany. These changes aim to attract residents and commercial uses that can support a diverse range of households and income levels.

For the past 30 years, the City has worked to transform San Pablo Avenue into a more pedestrian-oriented retail boulevard. This culminated most recently in the 2016 General Plan, which reconsidered the role of San Pablo Avenue in the city and envisioned a more attractive, pedestrian-oriented corridor that supported mixed use development. Despite this foundational planning work, little has changed on San Pablo Avenue.

The City of Albany received a Senate Bill (SB) 2 grant from the State Department of Housing & Community Development in 2019 and a Local Early Action Planning (LEAP) grant in 2021 to streamline housing approvals and accelerate housing production, including for affordable housing. The City used these grants to prepare this Specific Plan. In this way, the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan is first and foremost intended to support the development of housing on the corridor. Other important initiatives,



A sampling of the varied character of San Pablo Avenue.

VISION

To transform San Pablo Avenue into a walkable, transit-oriented, mixed-use urban boulevard and sustainable, livable community that reflects Albany's unique identity. To add to the public realm with attractive building design that encourages social activity and supports economic, racial and ethnic diversity with a range of household types and integration of retail, services, restaurants.

such as commercial development, public open spaces, and mobility improvements are addressed secondarily through parallel work efforts.

This plan amends design and development standards, and policies that address development of multi-family housing on San Pablo Avenue to implement the goals of the General Plan and Housing Element. The Specific Plan includes Design Guidelines applicable to development on the corridor and amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and General Plan that implement the Specific Plan initiatives.

This Specific Plan fulfills the following purposes:

- **Vision:** Expresses the vision for public improvements and private development through the 2040 planning horizon.
- **Implementation:** Articulates the steps to support this vision through private development, improvements to the public realm, and community participation; provides more certainty to the development community; and guides City staff, decision-makers, and community members during individual project review.
- **Zoning Amendments:** Modifies zoning standards in the San Pablo Commercial and R-3 districts to align development standards, overlay districts, use requirements, and design standards with current prototypical building types; and to establish objective standards for what is required of individual development projects to support livability, sustainability, and affordability.

This Specific Plan's vision will be implemented by both the City, future developers and property owners, and community members who live, shop, and gather in its spaces. The Plan has a 20-year time horizon--5 years beyond the current General Plan horizon. It is a long-term plan expected to unfold incrementally, as catalyst projects are constructed, new residents arrive, and private properties turn over.



View of San Pablo Avenue at Solano Avenue looking north. (November 2021)



The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan focuses on the potential development of SPC-zoned parcels in the City of Albany, with more modest changes to the R-3-zoned parcels within the planning area. (June 2020)



View of Adams Street and Kains Avenue, parallel streets to San Pablo Avenue. (June 2020)

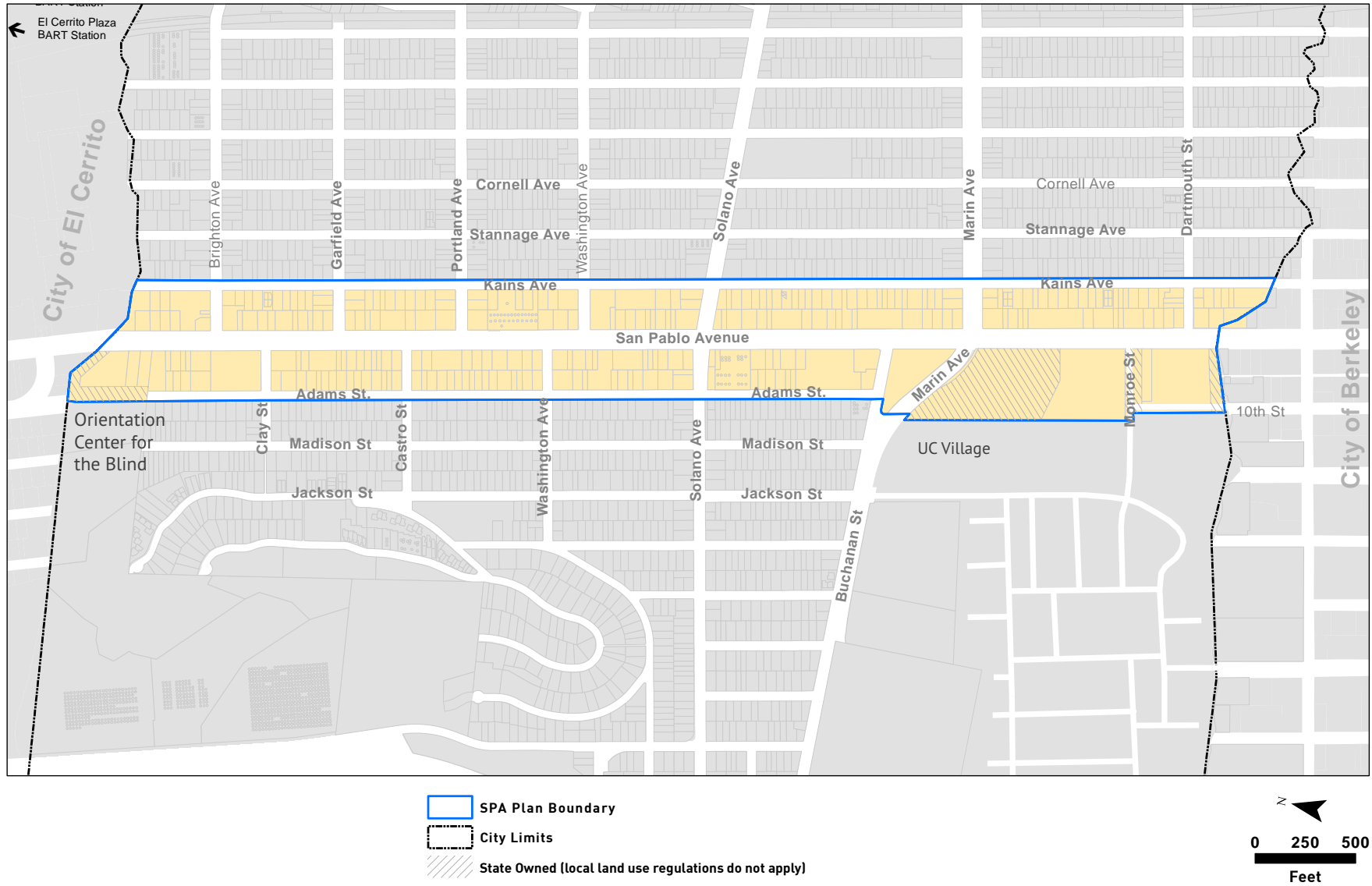
Plan Boundaries

Figure 1-1 identifies the Specific Plan planning area. The planning area generally extends the length of San Pablo Avenue, between the northern and southern city limits, and from Kains Avenue to the east and Adams Street to the west.

The boundary jogs at Marin Avenue to include City Hall and the fire station. It then extends through the large University of California parcel to capture the SPC-zoned parcels along the San Pablo Avenue frontage. The Gill Tract and farm are included geographically as a result, although no development is anticipated. In fact, the parcel and the State-owned parcel (Center for the Blind), at the northern end of the planning area, are exempt from local land use regulations.

The proposed planning area totals 81 acres, inclusive of public rights-of-way.

FIGURE 1-1: PLANNING AREA



Planning Context

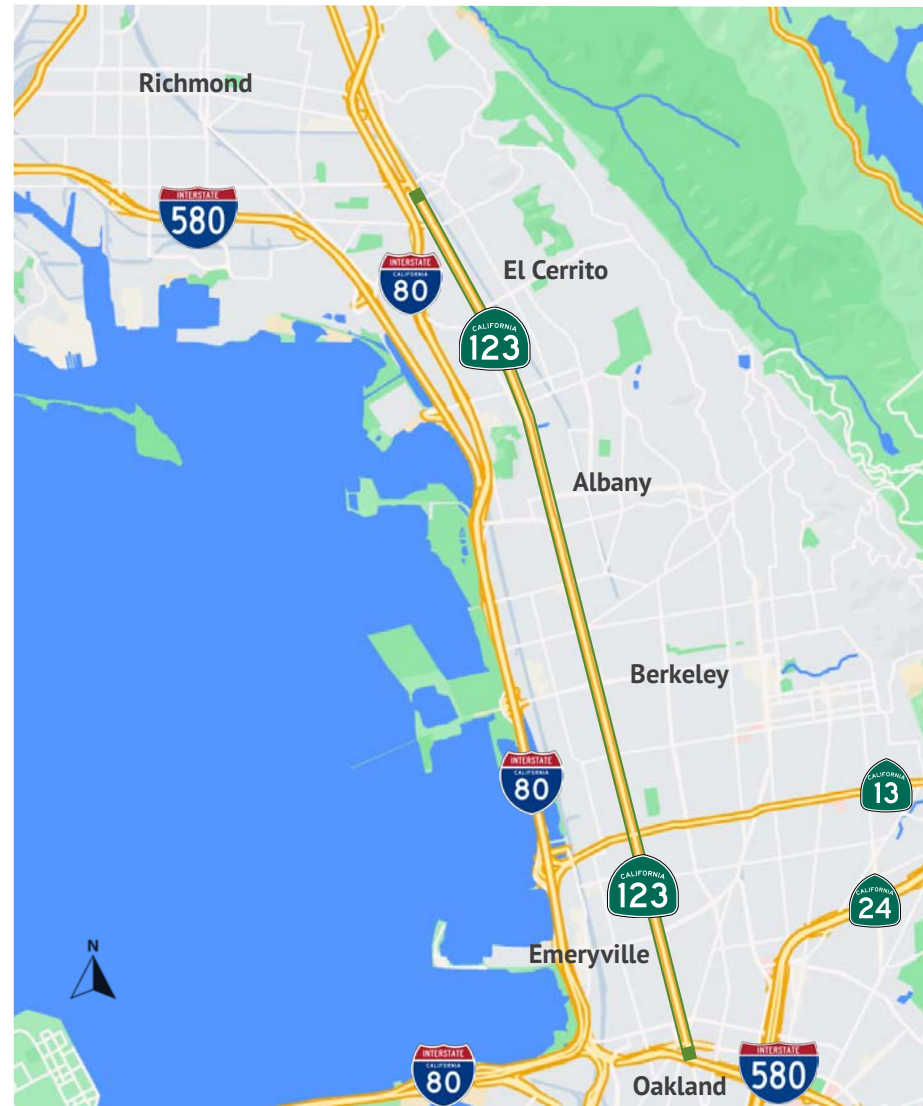
This Specific Plan establishes a detailed vision for San Pablo Avenue that builds on the City's 2016 General Plan. At the same time, the implementation strategy for this Specific Plan respond to changes in State law that necessitate a new way of conducting local planning, including in terms of the preparation of objective standards.

State Law and Objective Standards

State law relies more and more on projects' compliance with objective standards to streamline approval of housing projects. Currently, the City has objective standards in the form of development standards (e.g., height, setbacks, floor area ratio), but few objective design standards (e.g., requirements for articulation and facade design). This Specific Plan, and its related implementing standards, aims to strengthen the City's objective standards, identify the City's design and development priorities for San Pablo Avenue, and ensure applicants' compliance with these priorities on housing development projects. Furthermore, this project helps the City to comply with State legislation that allows projects meeting objective standards to undergo a streamlined approval process.

State Density Bonus Law

State Law has played a key role in facilitating development on San Pablo Avenue in Albany and adjacent cities. State Density Bonus Law (Government Code section 65915) gives developers the right to build additional dwelling units in exchange for building affordable or senior housing. Projects can receive waivers to modify development standards (e.g., height, setbacks) and reduce parking requirements in order to accommodate affordable units. Although taller heights and densities than what this Specific Plan allows are possible under State Density Bonus law, buildings are unlikely to exceed much beyond 6-8 stories, given the change in construction type above those levels. Still, the City may continue to see State Density Bonus applications in the Specific Plan area. Although project sponsors may not need additional density bonuses, they may seek out waivers or concessions, such as setbacks or ground-floor retail requirements, respectively.



San Pablo Avenue is State Route 123, where Caltrans has jurisdiction within the street right-of-way, including the parking lane, bicycle facilities, bus lanes, vehicle lanes, striping, and traffic signals.

Zoning History on San Pablo Avenue

San Pablo Ave. has undergone a number of zoning changes over the past 50+ years, as the City aimed to fulfill various policy goals. Prior to construction of Interstate 80 in the 1950s, San Pablo Avenue was the major north-south highway through the central East Bay. This encouraged the pattern of region-serving, auto-oriented land uses that still exists today along much of the corridor. The 1961 zoning ordinance allowed a maximum building height of 75 feet along the corridor, anticipating a higher density future for the avenue. In the 1978 zoning code update, the height limit was reduced to 45 feet in an effort to scale back potential development. The 38-foot height limit adopted in 2014 further reduced potential development. This Specific Plan represents a rethinking about height and density on the corridor, in a way that allows for transitions to existing lower density uses, while providing opportunities for greater racial and economic equity and diversity.

Albany General Plan

Adopted in 2016, the Albany General Plan envisions a transformation of San Pablo Avenue as a retail and residential mixed-use destination. The recent General Plan update reconsidered the role of San Pablo Avenue in the city, envisioning “a transformation of this corridor from auto-oriented commercial uses to more attractive, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development.” Policies support this evolution of San Pablo Avenue, while employing height transitions, noise reductions, and other design considerations to buffer effects on lower density residential homes to the east and west of the corridor.

Albany Housing Element

A major shift in the State’s expectations for housing in Albany occurred during the preparation of this Specific Plan. The State and regional government had an expectation that the City would accommodate 335 units during the 2014-2022 5th cycle Housing Element. (This unit number is known at the Regional Housing Needs Assessment or RHNA). This unit count more than tripled to 1,114 units during the 2023-2031 6th cycle Housing Element. In order to comply with State Housing Element law, the City expects to accommodate the majority of this new housing on San Pablo Avenue. This Specific Plan identifies zoning changes necessary to meet the RHNA requirement and facilitate certification of the 2023-2031 Housing Element by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

San Pablo Avenue is State Route 123 from Oakland to Richmond, including within Albany. Caltrans has jurisdiction within the street right-of-way, including the parking lane, bicycle facilities, bus lanes, vehicle lanes, striping, and traffic signals. The City has sidewalk maintenance responsibilities, including light standards, bus shelters, and street trees, although Caltrans maintains a list of preferred street tree species and location standards.

Relationship to Other Adopted Policies & Plans

This Specific Plan builds upon past efforts that focused on mobility and streetscape issues that were addressed in the past. An Urban Design Concept Plan was prepared in 1989, followed by Design Guidelines in 1993. A San Pablo Avenue Vision Plan was adopted in 1998, followed by a Streetscape Plan in 2001. Capital improvement projects that have followed these plans have improved the street’s appearance. This Specific Plan builds on and replaces these previous plans to confirm the plan vision and identify implementation tools for future development.

Transportation plans and improvements that support the housing and mixed use development anticipated in this Specific Plan are described in Chapter 4. Specifically, a Complete Streets Plan was adopted for San Pablo Avenue and Buchanan Street in 2013, and a regional-level Corridor Plan by the Alameda County Transportation Commission was underway as of 2022.

Additionally, this Specific Plan involves two other local and regional plans.

2019 Climate Action and Adaptation Plan

The 2019 Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) was adopted by the Albany City Council in December of 2019. The CAAP will guide the City towards its emissions reduction goals: 70% GHG reductions by 2035, and net zero emissions by 2045. The CAAP identified on-road transportation as the greatest source of carbon emissions in the City of Albany. To that

end, this Specific Plan encourages a reduction in transportation demand in Albany through focused increases in density along the busiest transit corridor in the City, with targeted development nodes throughout that increase active transportation opportunities for residents across Albany to access the Avenue. The CAAP also addresses decarbonization of the building sector by reducing reliance on natural gas, and promotes climate adaptive landscaping, responsible materials management, and efficient use of clean energy.

ABAG/MTC Priority Development Area

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)/Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has identified the San Pablo Avenue corridor a Priority Development Area (PDA). This designation highlights transit-oriented locations, with high densities and diverse uses, that will be the focus of the region's growth. Locally-designated PDAs are the focus of ABAG's Sustainable Communities Strategy, a plan to curb greenhouse gases through land use and transportation planning, required by Senate Bill 375. The designation, in combination with this Specific Plan, improves the City's eligibility for future funding for relevant public projects on the corridor.

Statutory Requirements

The specific plan is authorized by California Government Code sections 65450 through 65457. This law authorizes adoption of a specific plan for the implementation of an area covered by the General Plan. This Specific Plan implements the vision within the General Plan and the zoning ordinance district purposes that are applicable to the planning area. A key statutory element of a specific plan is preparation of an infrastructure plan, including water, sewer, solid waste, and energy to support plan development. State law also exempts certain residential projects from additional California Environmental Quality Act review if the proposed project is consistent with the Specific Plan.

The following excerpts identify the content requirements for specific plans defined in Government Code Section 65451.

Government Code Section 65451

(a) A specific plan shall include a text and a diagram or diagrams which specify all of the following in detail:

(1) The distribution, location, and extent of the uses of land, including open space, within the area covered by the plan.

(2) The proposed distribution, location, and extent and intensity of major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy, and other essential facilities proposed to be located within the area covered by the plan and needed to support the land uses described in the plan.

(3) Standards and criteria by which development will proceed, and standards for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, where applicable.

(4) A program of implementation measures including regulations, programs, public works projects, and financing measures necessary to carry out paragraphs (1), (2), and (3).

(b) The specific plan shall include a statement of the relationship of the specific plan to the general plan.

California Government Code sections 65453 and 65454 provide further direction for adoption and revisions to the specific plan as follows.

Government Code Section 65453

(a) A specific plan shall be prepared, adopted, and amended in the same manner as a general plan, except that a specific plan may be adopted by resolution or by ordinance and may be amended as often as deemed necessary by the legislative body.

(b) A specific plan may be repealed in the same manner as it is required to be amended.

Government Code Section 65454

No specific plan may be adopted or amended unless the proposed plan or amendment is consistent with the general plan.

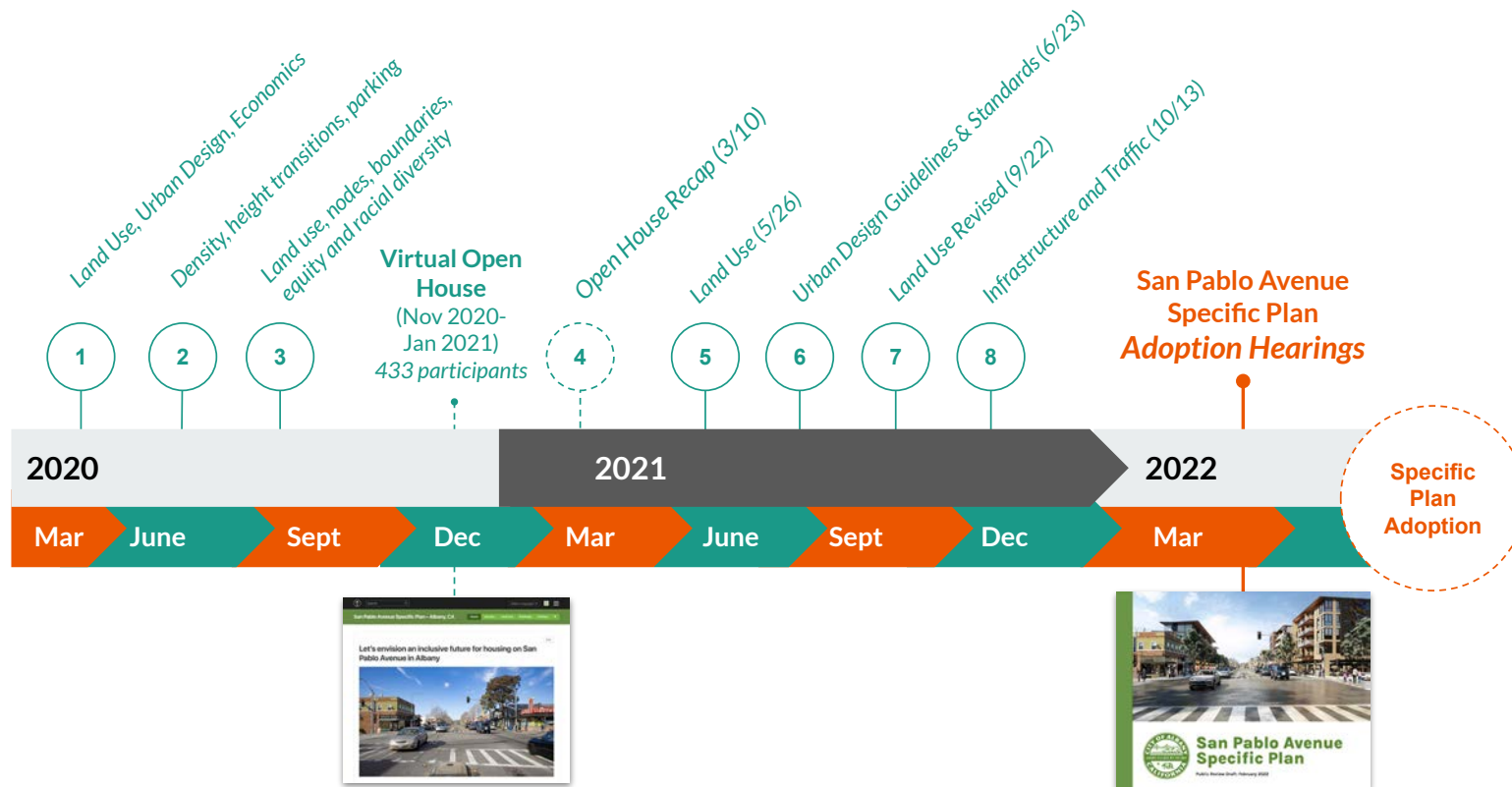
Community Outreach

Community members participated in development of the plan through a series of meetings with the Planning & Zoning Commission and in an Open House. All meetings were conducted virtually as a means to provide socially-distanced public outreach during the COVID-19 pandemic and related shelter-in-place orders.

Seven Planning and Zoning Commission Study Sessions were held to invite participation in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan. During Planning & Zoning Commission meetings, Commissioners and members of the public explored issues related to housing and commercial

development, market economics, density and building height, transitions to lower density residential zones, placemaking through designated “nodes,” and multifamily and mixed-use building design.

A Virtual Open House known as the Winter 2021 Community Forum was held through an online platform called Neighborland over a two-month period between November 2020 and January 2021. The Open House provided a forum for the community to discuss the Specific Plan policy options and their priorities for the planning area. Notification of the Open House was sent through postcards, fliers, emails, Nextdoor



posts, through eNews, on social media, and on the City Website. The emails and social media posts were sent multiple times, and the ending date of the survey was extended to give people a chance to respond.


A total of 462 participants viewed the site for an average of 5 minutes at a time. There was over 80 hours of engagement online with 72 unique individuals providing feedback. Office Hours accompanied the Open House for those who wished to meet in a “live” format.

Approximately 90% of those who contributed to the survey lived in Albany or had a business in Albany and 40% lived within two blocks of the corridor.

San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan – Albany, CA

Vision Identity Land Use Buildings Parking

Let's envision an inclusive future for housing on San Pablo Avenue in Albany



About this plan for San Pablo Avenue

The City of Albany has received a Senate Bill (SB) 2 grant from the State Department of Housing & Community Development to streamline housing approvals and accelerate housing production, including for affordable housing.

A virtual open house ran from November 2020 through January 2021, using the Neighborland platform as a means to provide socially-distanced public outreach.

The analyzed data generally divided into two sentiments: “Keep San Pablo the way it is now” and “San Pablo Avenue needs to evolve.” Those who want to keep it the way it is now worry about additional housing and what that will bring. Those who want it to evolve see an opportunity for improvement, a way to address the housing crisis, and also desire more retail and commercial services within walking distance.

The survey asked about the heart, heights, daylight plane, retail, and parking:

- The heart of San Pablo Avenue was identified at Solano Avenue, but there was another potential center at Buchanan. Many who commented that there is no center there now.
- Many of the responses talked about the appropriateness of San Pablo for housing. Some are concerned about the traffic on the streets next to new development. Others asked where else in Albany would this be best? The majority of participants said that housing makes more sense in the Plan Area because it is already an urban, transit oriented, underutilized area.
- The desire to preserve access to light, air, and provide privacy was brought up by multiple participants. The comment “Do shadows supersede the severe housing shortage?” speaks to the opposite sentiment.
- The majority of respondents would like to maintain the option for commercial on San Pablo Avenue, however 39% were also okay with non-commercial uses, like residential entryways at the ground floor given the existing challenging retail market.
- When asked about reducing the parking requirement, one-third did not support reduced parking requirements while two-thirds were okay with it. Bike parking was well supported.
- Many further comments were about how affordable housing could be built citywide, how to make housing more affordable in general, and ways to manage the impacts to adjacent neighborhoods. There was also desire expressed for public art, connections to trails, creeks, gardens, parks, and the outdoors, and better transit and pedestrian environments.

Plan Organization and Structure

The Plan is organized into four chapters following this introduction.

- Chapter 2: Land Use
- Chapter 3: Urban Design
- Chapter 4: Infrastructure & Mobility
- Chapter 5: Implementation
- Appendices

Within each chapter, draft policies are divided into two categories:

1. **Guiding Principles:** Statements of intent that provide the general objectives for each topic and chapter. They identify overarching objectives for this Specific Plan which encompass land use, urban design, mobility, public spaces, and infrastructure.
2. **Implementing Policies:** Specific implementation strategies, zoning amendments, and other action-oriented programs to support the guiding principles and plan vision, and facilitate implementation. These policies will be implemented by the City staff and decision-makers, other public agencies, and/or private property owners, as appropriate. The Urban Design chapter specifies Design Guidelines in lieu of policies.

Zoning modifications and design standards will be adopted concurrently with the Specific Plan and codified in the Zoning Ordinance and a separate Design Standards document, respectively. Standards and guidelines, as of 2022, are summarized in Appendix A for easy reference. However, the Zoning Ordinance should be consulted for the most up-to-date requirements.





Illustration of potential future development on San Pablo Avenue looking north at the intersection with Solano Avenue

CHAPTER 2: LAND USE

Contents:

- Overview
- Guiding Principles
- Existing Conditions
- Housing Development
- Commercial Development
- Zoning Standards
- Potential Buildout
- Development Potential
- Policies

Overview

This chapter establishes a framework for land use and development in the Planning Area. Policies and recommended zoning changes support the development of mixed use buildings fronting San Pablo Avenue, with ground-floor commercial development and upper story residential units. New residential population and new mixed-use development supports walking and gathering, enhancing the vibrancy and sustainability of the Planning Area. The land use framework seeks to balance the need for development standards that allow for financially feasible development, with building designs that are contextually appropriate and transition to adjacent residential districts and uses. The framework encourages housing at a range of income levels and for a range of household types to support economic, racial, and household-type diversity in the Planning Area and the City as a whole.

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles establish the intent for the land use framework and implementing policies:

1. **Housing Equity and Diversity.** Facilitate housing for a range of income levels and housing types in order to improve socioeconomic and racial equity and inclusion.
2. **Varied Commercial Uses.** Support local- and regional-serving retail and commercial uses accessible to all modes.
3. **Neighborhood Retail Pattern.** Concentrate small-format retail, service, and restaurant development into nodes with a fine-grain pattern of development that supports vibrancy and synergy between commercial uses.
4. **Alternative Transportation Modes.** Develop a mix of uses and an expanded residential population that support transit use, biking, and walking.
5. **Sustainability.** Improve livability and community vibrancy, conserve resources, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency, stormwater management practices, land use and transportation policies that support mixed use walkable development.
6. **Context and Transitions.** Modify development standards to facilitate feasible residential and mixed-use development, while ensuring height and bulk transitions to abutting residential districts.



Existing commercial uses within the planning area include (top to bottom) retail, office, and auto-related uses. The area includes 490,000 square feet of commercial development.

Existing Conditions

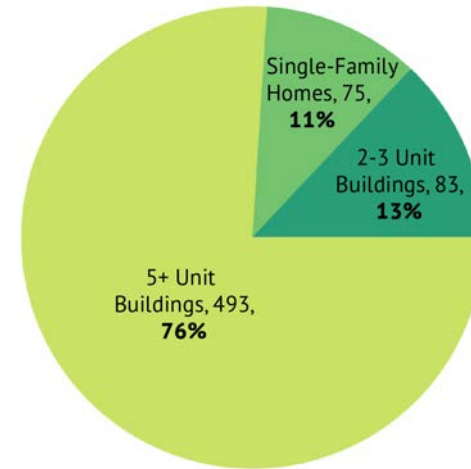
Existing Uses

The Planning Area contains a broad mix of residential and commercial development. The majority of housing units are multi-family, as shown in Chart 2-1. Retail uses and restaurants on the corridor represent over half of the commercial floor area on the corridor, as shown in Chart 2-2. The remaining commercial area is split between auto-related uses (repair, sales, car wash, gas stations), and office uses. In 2020, the Planning Area included approximately 654 housing units and 490,000 square feet of commercial development, in addition to surface parking lots and areas devoted to public uses.



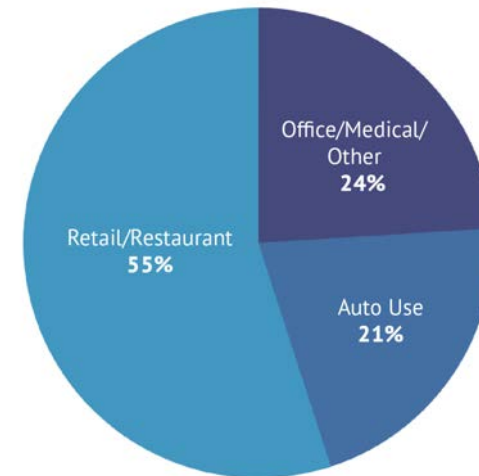
Existing housing within the planning area includes multi-family and single-family, often adjacent to each other. The area includes 654 housing units.

CHART 2-1: HOUSING UNITS, BY TYPE, WITHIN THE PLANNING AREA



Source: Alameda County Assessor, 2020.

CHART 2-2: COMMERCIAL USES, BY TYPE, WITHIN THE PLANNING AREA



Source: Alameda County Assessor, 2020.

Existing/Proposed Land Use Designations

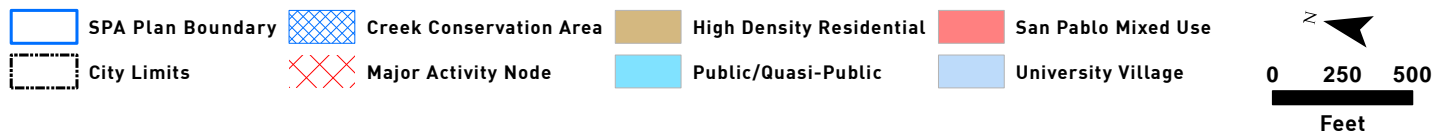
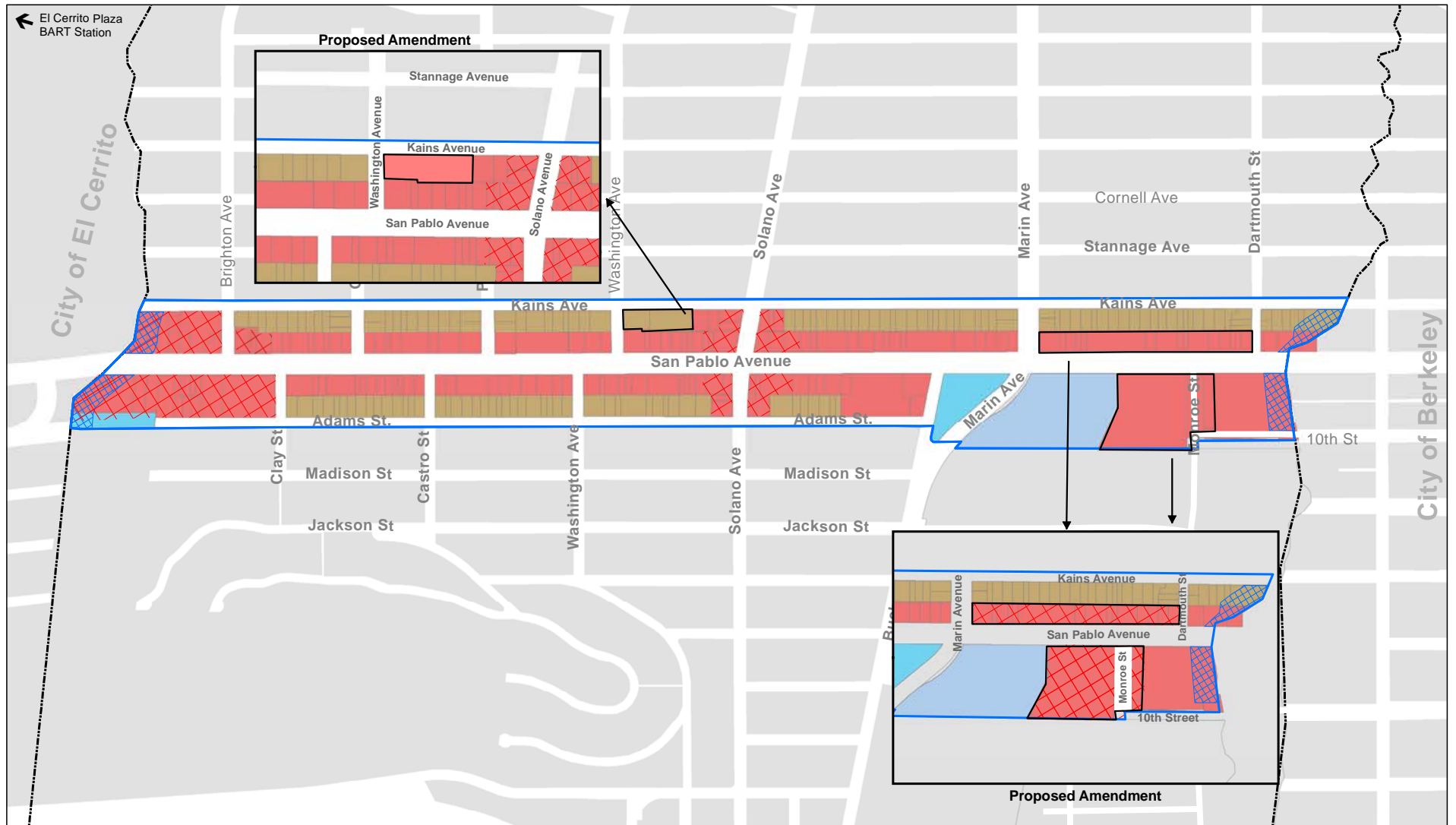
Land use is regulated by designations in the General Plan and district standards in the Zoning Ordinance, as shown in Figures 2-1 and 2-2, respectively. With the exception of City Hall and UC Village, the San Pablo Mixed Use and High Density Residential General Plan land use designation correspond to the San Pablo Commercial and High-Density Residential Zoning Districts, respectively.

The Specific Plan does not propose another layer of land use designations. This is because the General Plan land use designations and Zoning district purposes already convey the intended direction of the plan efforts. The framework does propose zoning map amendments from R-3 to the SPC on the parcels fronting Kains Avenue south of Washington Avenue, and the corresponding General Plan map amendments from High Density Residential to San Pablo Mixed Use (see inset maps on Figures 2-1 and 2-2). This is to allow for additional development opportunities on parking lots, including the parcel occupied by Mechanics Bank, on a block that is adjacent to Solano Avenue and already occupied by 2- and 3-story homes and apartments.



Mixed-Use buildings built under existing development standards for the San Pablo Mixed Use land use designation and San Pablo Commercial zoning designation. Upper image of mixed use at San Pablo Avenue and Solano Avenue, bottom image of mid-block on San Pablo Avenue between Portland Avenue and Washington Avenue.

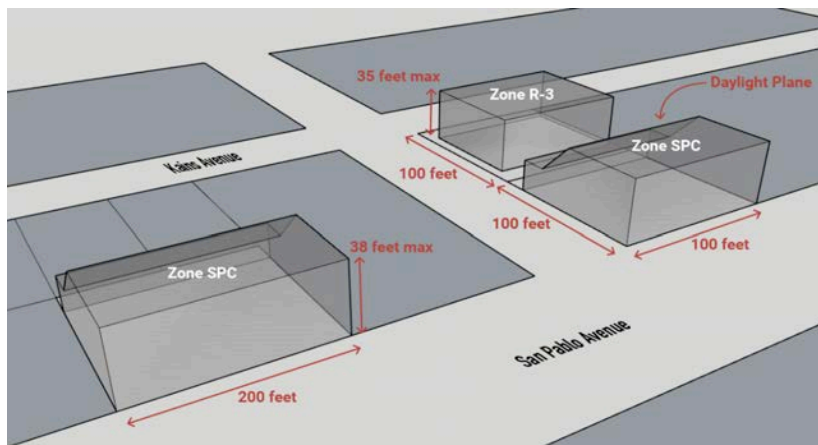
FIGURE 2-1: GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DESIGNATIONS AND OVERLAYS (EXISTING AND PROPOSED)



Existing/Proposed Zoning Districts

Existing zoning regulations treat the retail environment in the corridor the same way, by requiring ground-floor commercial development for all new projects throughout the district. Upper stories may be residential or commercial. As a result, retail is spread out on San Pablo Avenue. There is little sense of hierarchy, order, or clustering that would enable customers to visit multiple businesses on a single trip, the way that customers park and walk to multiple locations on Solano Avenue.

The Planning Area is composed of two zoning districts: the San Pablo Commercial District (SPC) and the Residential High Density District (R-3). The existing district purposes are shown in the text box. These purposes convey the Specific Plan vision and are not proposed for amendment. However the specific development standards in the districts do not match these purpose statements. Existing density and intensity standards generally restrict conforming projects to three stories, which does not achieve high density development.



Prototypes of typical develop following existing zoning informed the revisions of standards that define the building envelope of SPC and R-3.



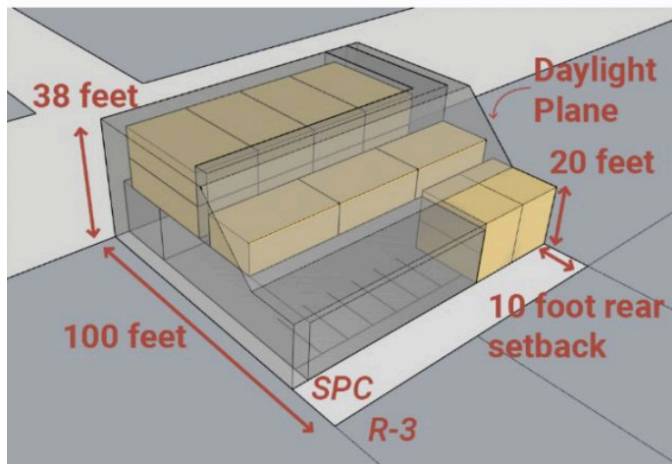
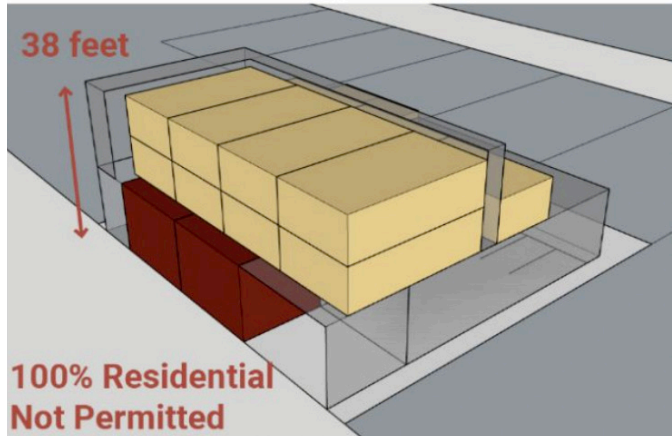
Townhomes on Kains built within the High Density Residential land use designation and Residential High Density (R-3) Zoning District.

Existing Zoning District Purposes (AMC 20.12.060)

San Pablo Commercial District (SPC): Accommodates commercial and retail businesses serving a Citywide or larger market in a boulevard environment, subject to specific standards. The district encourages the redevelopment of underutilized parcels into pedestrian-oriented retail, office, and high density residential development, which are preferably in mixed-use settings.

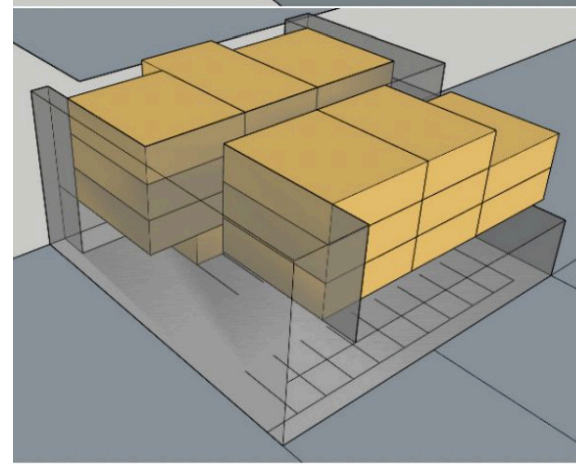
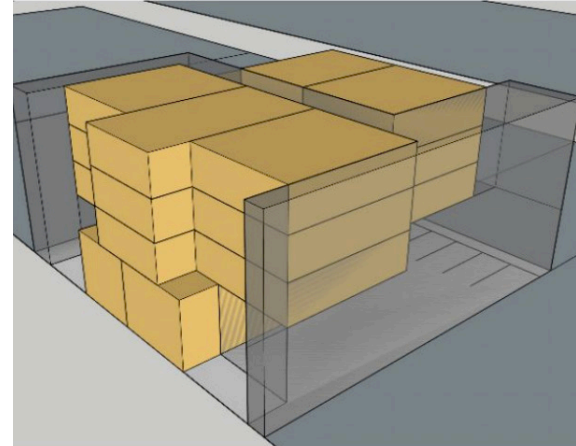
Residential High Density District (R-3): Provides opportunities for high-density residential development characterized by a mix of housing types, including townhouses, duplexes, apartments and condominiums, subject to appropriate standards.

BASE SPC ZONING CAPACITY TEST



Proposed: Total Units: 13 units
 Density: 56.5 du/ac
 Building Height: 38 feet, 3 stories
 Unit size: 500-750 sf per unit
 Ground Floor Commercial: 1,000sf
 FAR: 0.86 residential, 0.1 commercial
 Parking accommodated in lifts.

STATE DENSITY BONUS CAPACITY TEST



Proposed: Total Units: 19
 Density: 83 du/acre
 Building Height: 50 feet, 4 stories (waiver)
 Unit size: 800-1,200 sf per unit
 FAR: 1.83 residential (waiver)
 Rear setback: 0 feet (waiver)
 Concession: Ground-floor residential units at San Pablo Ave. frontage; no commercial square footage

Development capacity tests were used to show how much could be built using existing development standards compared to how much could be built with State Density Bonuses waivers.

Comparing the two scenarios:

BASE ZONING PROJECT

Meets the 63 du/ac density limit by proposing 13 small units (500-750 sq. ft.)

As a result of height limits, development can achieve only three stories. The project constructed is below the FAR limit. However, except perhaps on the transit-oriented north end of the corridor, these small sized units are unlikely to be built

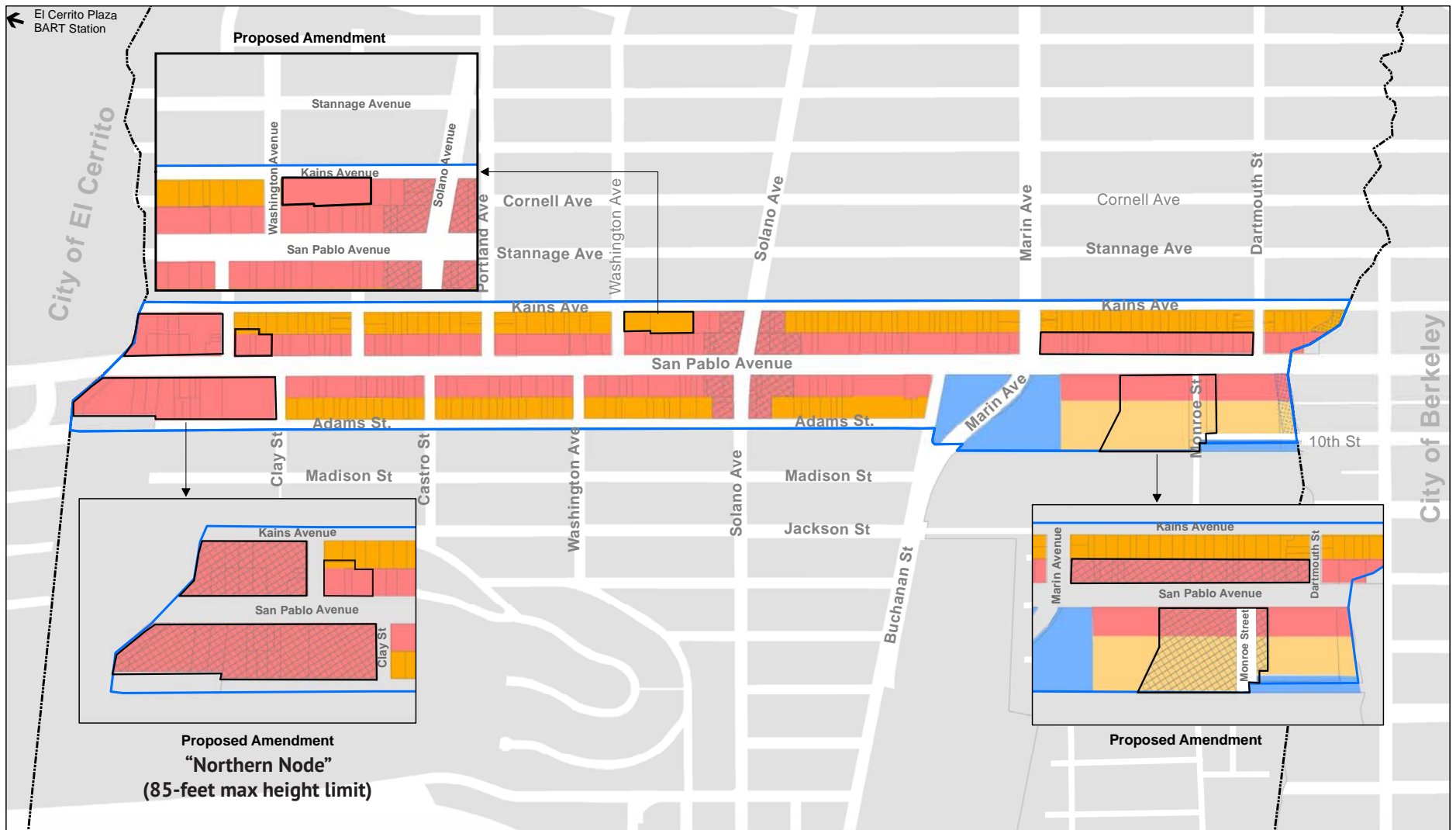
STATE DENSITY BONUS PROJECT

Falls within the 35% bonus density limit of 85 du/ac by proposing 19 more reasonably sized units (750 to 1,200 sq. ft.).

Requires several modifications to zoning standards:

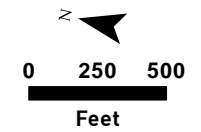
- waivers to reduce the rear setback, increase height, exceed the residential FAR, and reduce daylight plane
- concession to eliminate the ground-floor commercial requirement and instead locate residential units on the San Pablo Avenue frontage.

FIGURE 2-2: ZONING DISTRICTS AND OVERLAYS (EXISTING AND PROPOSED)



- San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Boundary
- City Limits
- Commercial Node Overlay
- Watercourse Overlay

- Public Facilities
- R-2 Residential Medium Density (28 feet max height)
- R-3 Residential High Density (35 feet max height)
- SPC San Pablo Commercial (68 feet max height, except where noted)



Housing Development

Housing Types

Albany has a range of residents at different stages of life, from families with young children who come for Albany’s great schools and community, to graduate students living in UC Village, to singles and seniors. More multifamily housing choices can make the City more inclusive to all racial and economic groups. The plan accommodates these generational changes and shifting demographics by allowing a range of housing types: including co-living models and studios that accommodate both younger and older individuals, and family-friendly units with larger bedroom counts.

Use Requirements

The Plan modifies land use requirements by prohibiting commercial uses above the ground-floor on Housing Element opportunity sites. It also expands opportunities for residential-only projects fronting San Pablo Avenue, by allowing these project types on sites built with 100% affordable units. Residential-only projects would also be feasible on the Kains and Adams Street frontages, as well as other side streets in the Plan Area.

Affordable Housing

The City currently has an inclusionary housing ordinance (AMC Section 20.40.040) that requires projects with at least five dwelling units to provide 15% of the units at below-market rates. Projects with five to ten units must provide one low-income unit (or pay a fee in-lieu); projects with ten or more units must provide half of the required affordable units to low-income households and half to very low-income households. Consistent with current practices, applicants may elect to pay a fee in lieu of providing below-market rate housing units on site.

Although this Plan does not propose to make changes to the 15% requirement, by increasing allowable density/FAR, the Plan does support more below-market rate housing. Additionally, this Plan offers height and density bonuses along the northern portion of the corridor (the “node” north of Brighton) in exchange for providing 20% of units at below-market rates.



Older 4-story Apartment Building on Kains



Mixed-Use Apartments on San Pablo Avenue



Senior Housing on San Pablo Avenue

Commercial Development

Historically, San Pablo Avenue has been a commercial corridor. The focus of the Specific Plan is on housing, but commercial use requirements have a substantial impact on residential project feasibility, the character of the corridor, and economic development. The desire for commercial development, from both vibrancy and tax revenue perspectives, must be weighed against housing goals and the competition for ground-floor space. This section explores the future of commercial retail development and its implications for vibrancy and the mixed use development typology.

Commercial Development Outlook

Retail uses are shifting from traditional retail sales (e.g., boutiques) to services, fitness, experiences, and showrooms. Food-service uses are expanding takeout and delivery services to include shared kitchens and “ghost” kitchens that provide cost-effective food preparation spaces. More interior space and exterior loading space is needed to support delivery services as a result. Flexibility in use requirements and space requirements can allow spaces to respond to market needs over time. The City does not anticipate a significant demand for office commercial space in the future within the Plan Area.



Typical Older One Story Building



Two Story Office Building



Single Story Neighborhood Retail



Single Story General Retail



Auto Serving - Large



Auto Serving - Small



Pad Restaurants



Shopping Centers

FIGURE 2-3: TYPICAL BUSINESS TYPOLOGIES, BY SIZE



Source: Christine Firstenberg, *Retail Real Estate Resources* (2020)

Shift to Smaller Commercial Spaces/ Support for Large Footprint Spaces

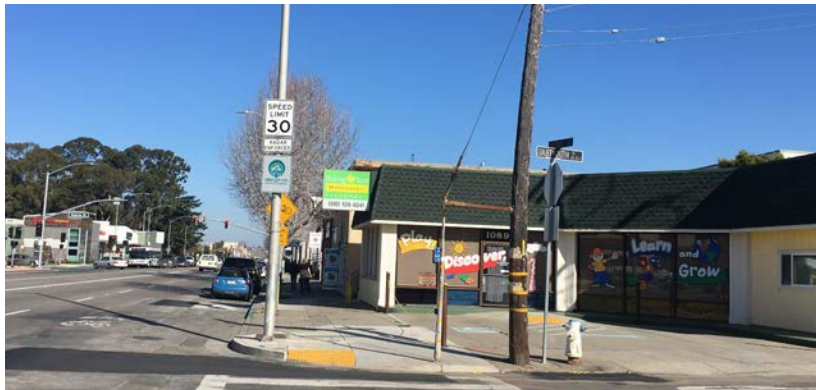
Most new development on the corridor will replace underutilized one-story commercial spaces, some of which are larger footprint spaces greater than 5,000 square feet. Typically, new mixed use developments only propose a small amount of retail, 1,000 to 2,000 square feet, to accommodate a café, for example. This is based on the premise of maximizing the area devoted to the more profitable residential units, and not to the more costly commercial spaces. If an existing 10,000-square

foot retail space is demolished for redevelopment, the new ground-floor retail space is unlikely to come back at that square footage, and almost never in an effective configuration (e.g., with sufficient depths greater than 50 feet, without columns).

The Plan aims to avoid the loss of large footprint retail spaces by requiring replacement retail on the largest parcels in the Plan Area.



This southwest corner of San Pablo Avenue and Solano Avenue has greater potential for activity and placemaking.



The southern border of Albany at Dartmouth Street presents opportunities for a gateway feature to signify entry into Albany.

Focus on Corners and Nodes

Retail tenants tend to want to be on corners, where they can maximize exposure and vehicle access. Retailers located on all four corners of an intersection create synergy. Retail tenants typically shy away from mid-block properties, and therefore these locations do not command the same commercial rents. Policies support a fine-grain retail pattern of stores at the node locations to increase foot traffic.

Challenges of Vertical Mixed Use

The General Plan envisions San Pablo Avenue with ground-floor commercial uses and residential units on upper stories. However, there are financial and physical challenges to this building typology.

First, increasing building heights and allowing higher density residential uses may increase land values. This may motivate a property owner to sell an existing commercial site to a multifamily residential developer, potentially reducing the commercial inventory.

Second, some residential developers find it challenging to design mixed use buildings. Often, they are not experienced with the physical needs and preferences of retailers. Different occupancy types require different space depths, exiting, parking, loading, refuse, and other space requirements, making circulation and access challenging. Typically, a mixed-use developer will make the commercial ground floor space as small as possible to allow for a more efficient layout of residential units on upper levels.

Third, residential developers prefer not to develop mixed-use buildings for economic reasons. Retail rents are low on San Pablo Avenue and do not cover the cost of construction at this time. They may also require separate financing. If given a choice, residential developers will choose not to develop ground-floor commercial.

Fourth, the City's commercial parking requirements are fairly high compared to neighboring jurisdictions and the methods to reduce required commercial parking are complex. Even with reductions in residential parking requirements within the Plan Area, commercial parking requirements on an infill lot may be challenging to meet.

Policies in this chapter aim to address these challenges, but this balance will likely be a tension in plan implementation.

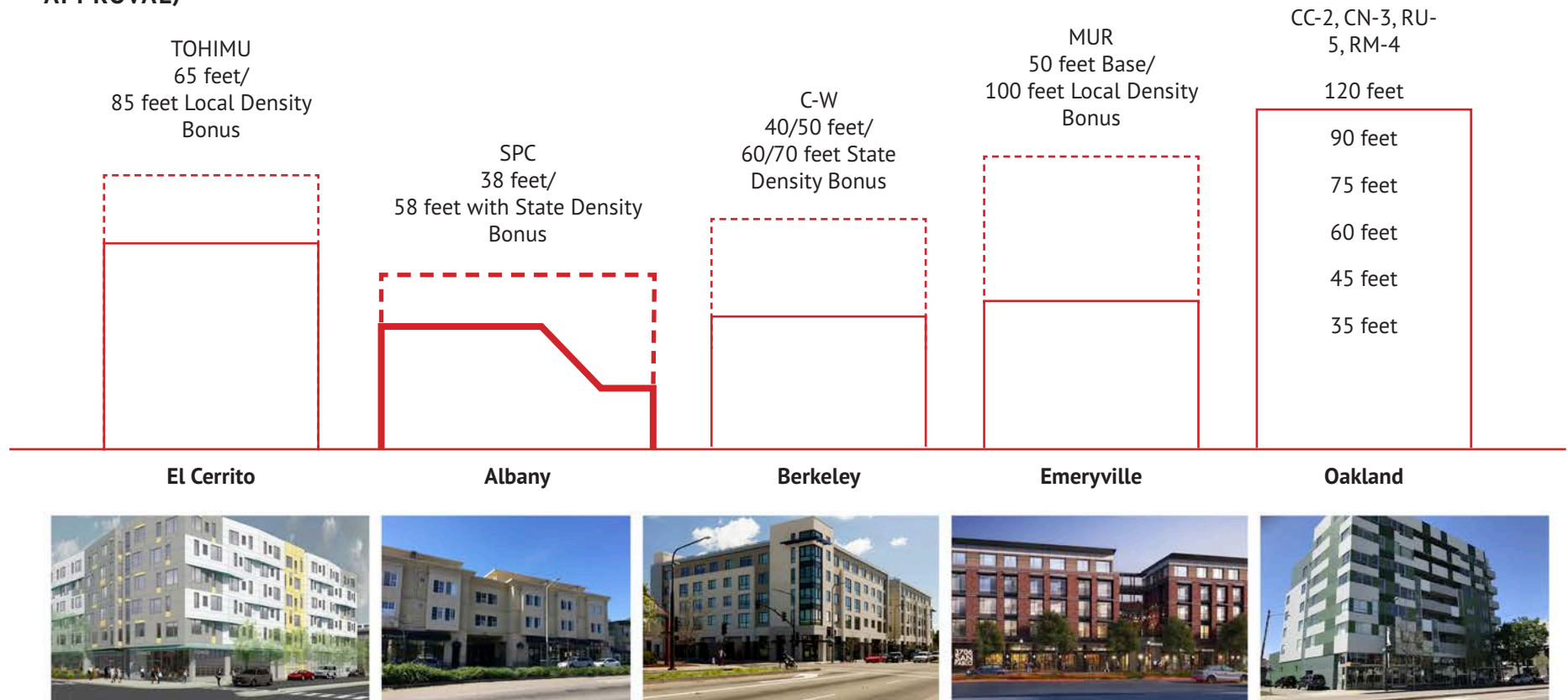
Zoning Standards

“Right-Sizing” Standards

The Plan revises zoning standards to align with market conditions and the revitalization of the corridor envisioned by the General Plan. These changes include:

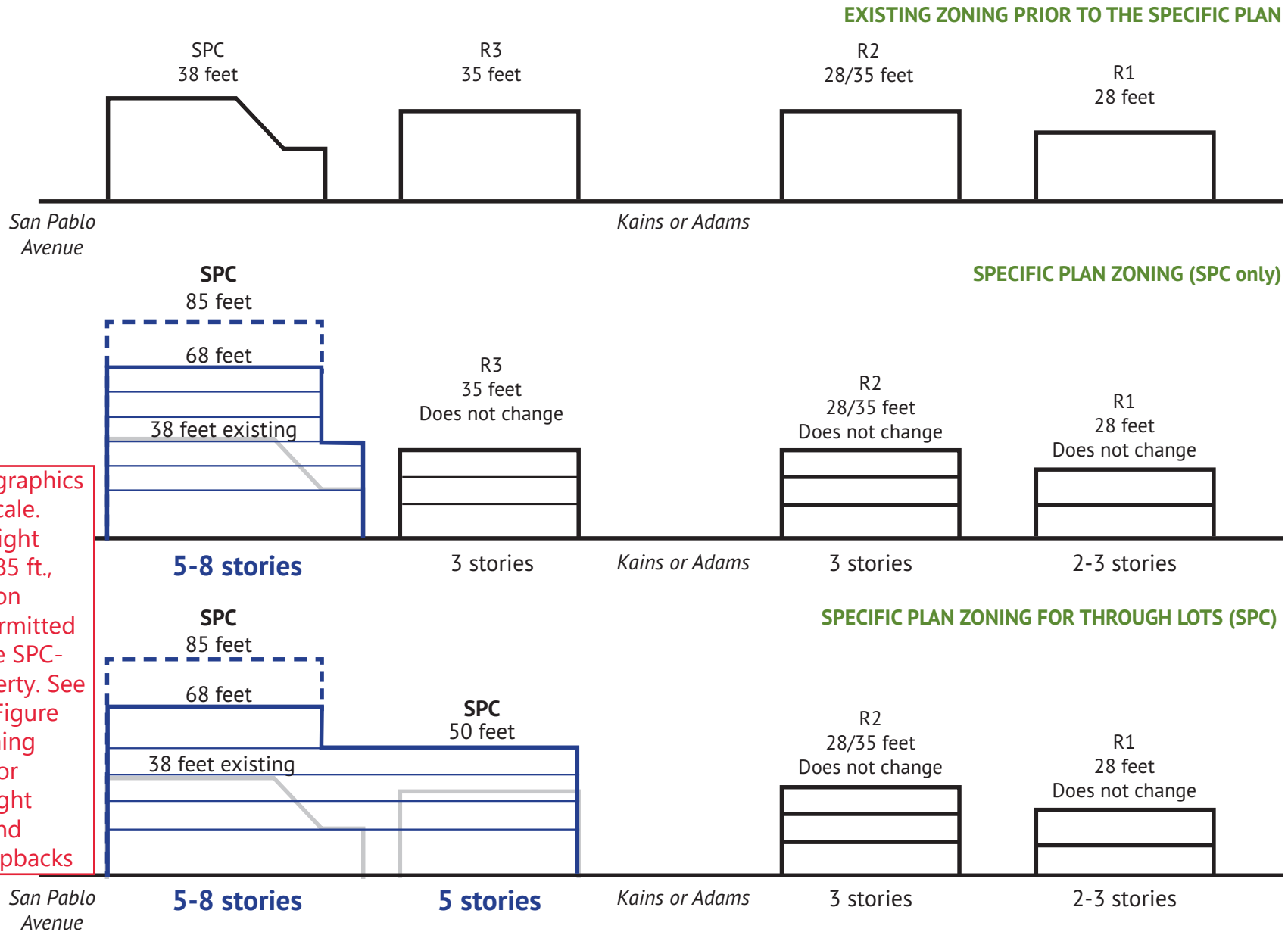
- Increasing building heights from 38 feet to 65 feet (85 feet in the northern node and on SPC-zoned through-lots);
- Removing residential density requirements to reduce the incentive toward larger (more expensive) units;
- Increasing floor area ratio (FAR) limits to allow for the higher density development envisioned in the General Plan; and
- Eliminating the daylight plane requirement in favor of an upper story setback requirement to make development projects feasible at the new heights proposed.

FIGURE 2-5: TYPICAL ZONING HEIGHT LIMITS FOR SAN PABLO AVENUE, BY CITY (2020, PRIOR TO SPECIFIC PLAN APPROVAL)



Source: Urban Field Studio, 2020.

FIGURE 2-6: ZONING HEIGHT LIMITS FOR SAN PABLO AVENUE IN ALBANY



Nodes and Overlay Districts

A node is the focus point in a neighborhood for activity and gathering that establishes a sense of place. Developing nodes in the Plan Area can create a stronger identity and focus for community activity and economic vibrancy. The General Plan identifies Major Activity Nodes on San Pablo Avenue and the Zoning Ordinance defines overlay districts intended to implement them, but neither document codifies enforceable standards.

It is at the nodes that there is an opportunity for placemaking. This Specific Plan aims to pair node designations with specific standards to encourage retail, restaurants, and gathering in public spaces as the heart of the community. The placemaking intent is to reinforce the identity of the node and the corridor as a whole and to provide new places for social well-being.

This chapter describes development and use standards specific to the nodes, while Chapter 3 identifies design guidelines and placemaking ideas.

Two nodes are already identified in the General Plan land use map - the Solano Avenue node and the northern node. This Specific Plan modifies the General Plan to add a third node at UC Village, highlighting the change in use and activity since the General Plan was adopted and the retail and residential uses have expanded there. These nodes are illustrated in Figure 2-7.

In the future, the City could consider extending the third node to include the Marin/Buchanan intersection with San Pablo Avenue. The intersection is a significant east-west gateway that has the potential to transform into a more significant urban center. For example, redeveloping one of the gas stations and City Hall as mixed-use civic and residential complex would generate new uses and population. Enhancing the corner at the UC-owned Gill Tract with a small plaza or art feature could enable a more iconic entry into Albany and the corridor.

This Specific Plan proposes to consolidate the overlay districts that have been created on San Pablo Avenue by expanding the existing Commercial Node Overlay District to encompass all three major activity nodes identified above. It then identifies development standards that can provide incentives for retail development, placemaking, and community gathering.

A “node” is a concept, which is described qualitatively in the Albany General Plan and expanded on in this Specific Plan. An “overlay district” is a zoning tool. This Specific Plan modifies overlay districts to establish development and design standards that can assist with placemaking in the nodes.

Major Activity Nodes (General Plan Designation)

This is an ‘overlay’ designation that is used to identify areas within the San Pablo and Solano Avenue business districts that are appropriate for uses that generate higher volumes of pedestrian activity. Zoning regulations for activity nodes may permit additional building height, or may require or incentivize ground floor uses which create active street life and foot traffic. The nodes areas are also priority areas for future capital investment in transit, streetscape improvements, public art, and other public realm improvements. They are particularly important to defining Albany’s “sense of place.”

Placemaking *refers to the design of public spaces that strengthen the connection between people and the places they share. Placemaking promotes better urban design, creative patterns of use, and the identities that define the “sense of place”. Placemaking is applied to shared public spaces such as plazas, streets, and public buildings.*

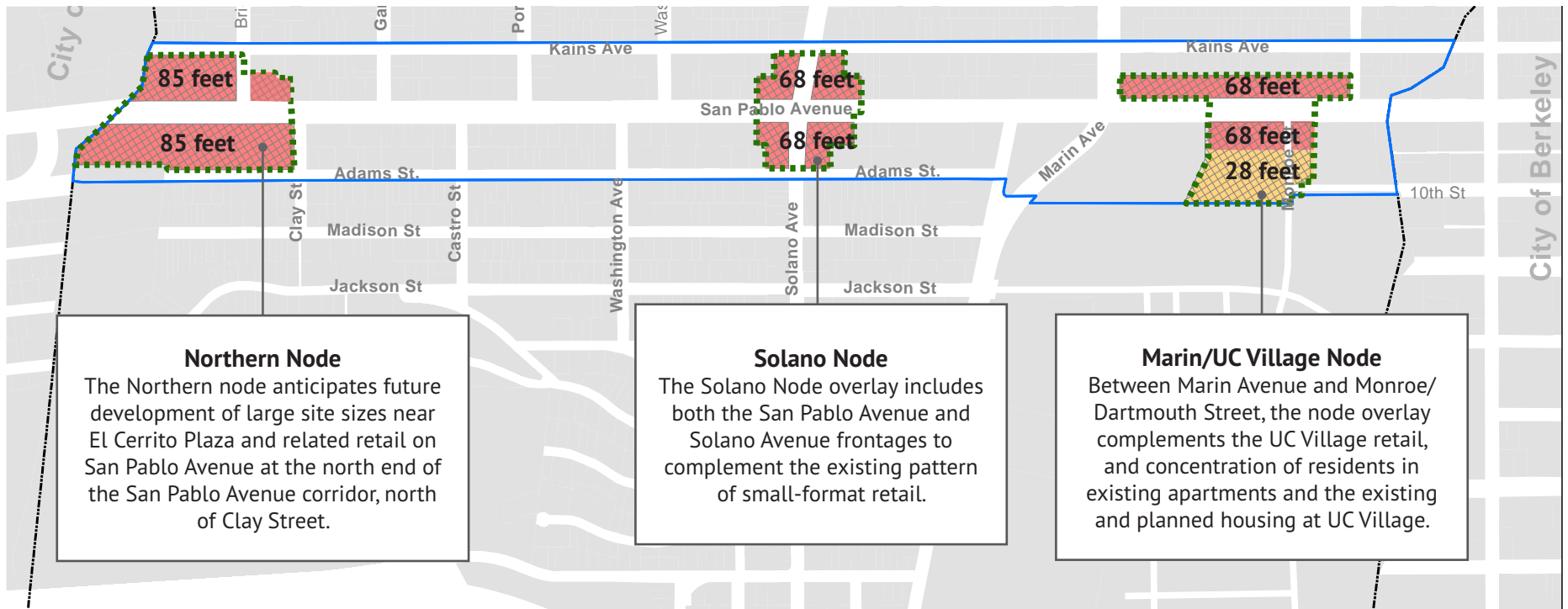
FIGURE 2-7: COMMERCIAL NODES



The Albany border near El Cerrito Plaza includes Cerrito Creek, but does not yet evoke any sense of a gateway. A connection at the dead end of Adams Street could make the creek more visible and accessible.

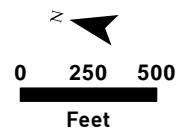
The General Plan has identified the central node for San Pablo Avenue at Solano Avenue. This significant node has the potential to make a stronger impression for the area. This node can also help emphasize the gateway to Solano Avenue to the east.

The Buchanan/Marin and San Pablo Avenue intersection has potential for gateway development, landmarks, or elements like a decorative seat wall, small plaza, or feature at the Gill Tract corner if UC pursues future landscaping improvements or other projects.



- Proposed Nodes
- San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Boundary
- City Limits
- Commercial Node Overlay

- R-2 Residential Medium Density
- R-3 Residential High Density
- SPC San Pablo Commercial



Potential Buildout

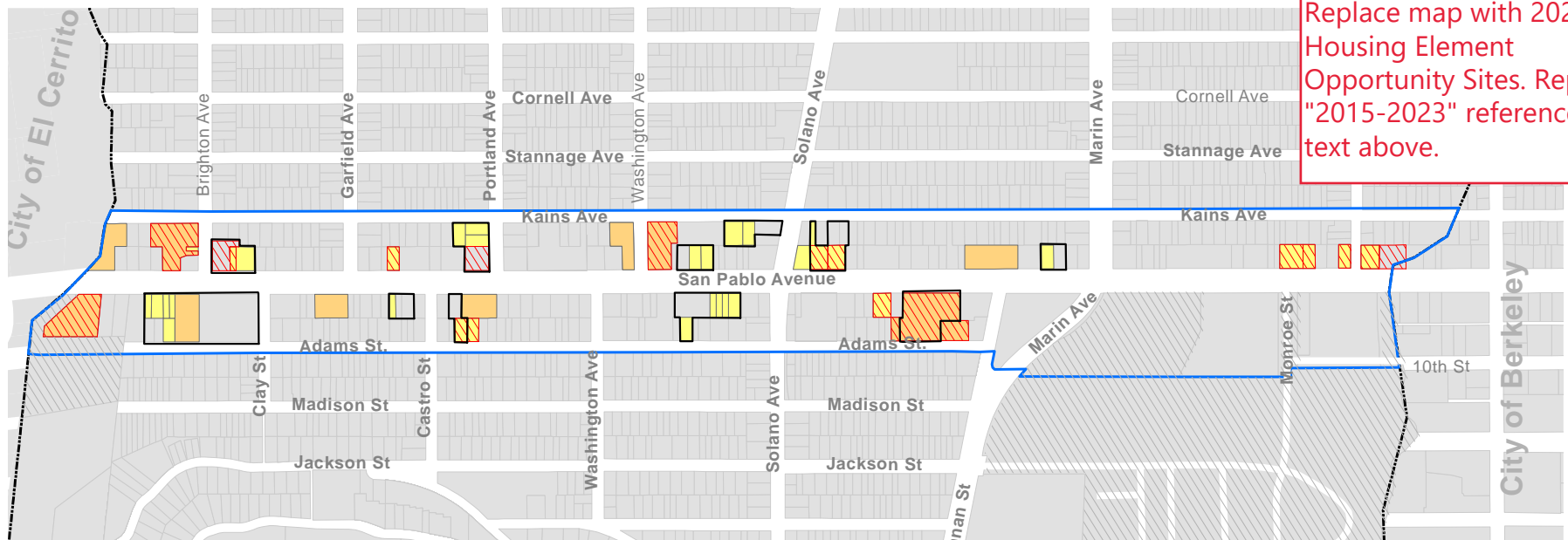
The most substantial redevelopment opportunities in the Plan Area are located within the SPC zoning district where the SPC zone extends through to Kains Avenue or Adams Street, or where ownership extends in a through-lot to these parallel streets, with zoning split between SPC and R-3. These sites tend to be larger and allow for more efficient site planning, circulation, and access. Proposed zoning changes focus within these areas, and at their transition points to residential districts.

On the other hand, many of the Plan Area's typical 5,000-square foot lots are unlikely to redevelop in the short-term. They do not produce enough unit yield to support the risk and cost of doing a development project. At present, rent levels and for-sale prices may not be high enough to create




an incentive for development on these small parcels. The corridor contains many long-time property owners who appear to earn sufficient income from existing uses, billboards, cell tower facilities, and leasing surface parking lots. There is an inherent tension between San Pablo Avenue being an appropriate corridor for cell tower facilities, and these facilities—typically on long-term leases—potentially inhibiting redevelopment. Implementation programs provide a variety of incentives and penalties (i.e., amortization of billboards) but redevelopment will require motivated property owners.

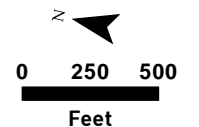
Figure 2-8 illustrates potential buildout sites where parcels are more likely to redevelop based on size and value.¹ This includes the 2015-2023 Housing Element Opportunity Sites, which are required to meet certain criteria under State Law, in particular restrictions on including some non-vacant sites. The Specific Plan, which has a longer planning horizon than the 8-Year Housing Element cycle, takes a more expansive view of potential sites. This map illustrates 56 potential buildout sites, which total 12.5 acres.

FIGURE 2-8: POTENTIAL BUILDOUT AREAS



¹ Potential buildout sites include parcels designated as vacant or parking lots or sites where assessed building value is less than assessed land value, according to Alameda County 2020 parcel data; and housing opportunity sites in the 2015-2023 Housing Element. Existing single-family homes and parcels less than 10,000 sq. ft. are excluded.

-  2015-2023 Housing Element Opportunity Sites
-  Sites less than 10,000sf
-  Sites greater than 10,000sf



Development Potential

The Specific Plan estimates development potential that could result from the Plan in order to identify necessary service, transportation and infrastructure improvements to support the new development.

The total buildout reported in Table 2-1 assumes that 65% of the opportunity sites would buildout over the plan horizon of 2040. Notably, this map is only intended as an illustrative example of which sites could redevelop. Property owners of potential buildout areas may or may not be interested in redevelopment now or in the future depending on their tenants' lease terms and other business interests. Additionally, sites that are not shown on this map could still redevelop. The plan has a 20-year time horizon which relates to the long-term nature of the plan, which is expected to unfold incrementally.

As shown in Table 2-1, this buildout scenario estimates 1,160 new housing units and 45,000 new square feet of commercial development accommodated over the time horizon of the plan. This would generate approximately 2,680 new residents based on current household size.² The actual number of units and commercial floor area produced could be more or less depending on property owner interest.

TABLE 2-1: DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL FOR THE SAN PABLO AVENUE SPECIFIC PLAN AREA

TYPE	UNIT/SQ .FT.
RESIDENTIAL	UNITS
Multifamily Apartments/Condos	1,130
Townhomes	30
Subtotal	1,160
Existing Dwelling Units	651
Total 2040 Dwelling Units (Rounded)	1,810
COMMERCIAL	SQ. FT.
New	45,000
Lost due to New Housing	119,000
Net Change	-74,000
Existing	482,000
Total 2040 Commercial (Rounded)	408,000

Source: Alameda County Parcel Data, 2020; Lexington Planning, 2021.

² Population based on 2.437 persons per household (California Department of Finance Estimates, 2020) and adjusting for a typical 5% vacancy rate.

Implementing Policies

Land Use Framework

LU-1: Nodes. Establish three “nodes” to support placemaking. In these locations, synergistic ground-floor commercial uses, iconic architectural features and public art are encouraged (see additional policies in Chapter 3). Amend the Major Activity Nodes in the General Plan and General Plan Land Use Map, and the Zoning Ordinance overlay districts and Zoning Map to facilitate this node vision.

1. At the north end of the corridor, north of Clay Street, take advantage of large site sizes, the proximity to El Cerrito Plaza and related retail on San Pablo Avenue. In this northern node, taller building heights and higher densities are permitted.
2. At Solano Avenue (both the San Pablo Avenue and Solano Avenue frontages) to complement the existing pattern of small-format retail.
3. Between Marin Avenue and Dartmouth Street (east side) and at UC Village retail, to support the burgeoning retail area and the large concentration of residents in apartments and at UC Village (existing and planned units).

LU-2: Overlays. Revise zoning overlay districts in the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map to streamline and clarify zoning standards and provide incentives for development at the nodes.

LU-3: General Plan Amendments. Amend the General Plan and General Plan Land Use Map to incorporate the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan and support higher-density mixed use development on the corridor, especially at node locations.

LU-4: Gateway Project. Facilitate a gateway project at the San Pablo/Marin/Buchanan intersection:

1. As a long-term strategy, consider redeveloping Albany City Hall to develop a new mixed use building in cooperation with a developer. Rebuild City Hall as a multi-story building, with City offices and residential uses. Consider closing Buchanan Street north of City Hall, utilizing the land over the right-of-way for development and/or City use
2. Work with property owners of the gas stations to consider redevelopment of one site as a mixed-use residential project.
3. Work with the University of California to integrate a plaza into the Gill Tract at the corner of San Pablo, to facilitate community gathering.

LU-5: Affordable Housing. Consistent with current practices, applicants may elect to pay a fee in lieu of providing below-market rate housing units on site. The City shall set the fee within the range of fees assessed by nearby cities. The City should explore changes to the City’s inclusionary housing policy, including potential increases in the percentage requirement.

Emphasize that the City's preferred policy is on-site inclusionary housing units. Add initial sentence: "The City encourages project sponsors to meet the City's inclusionary housing requirement by providing below-market rate units with the project."

Use Regulations

LU-6: Allowed Uses. Revise use regulations in the SPC zone of the Zoning Ordinance to support ground-floor commercial uses, active ground floor designs, a diverse range of household types, and prioritize housing and residential mixed-use development. Require ground-floor commercial uses in all locations, except project sites with 100% of units affordable to below-market rate income households (less than 120% of Area Median Income). Require active ground-floor design, regardless of use. (See standards in Chapter 3)

LU-7: Food-Related Uses. Support the evolution of food-related businesses from start-up ventures through established restaurants and stores. Respond to evolving public health requirements for food businesses by encouraging a range of formats and flexibility in tenant spaces and leasing arrangements. This includes, but is not limited to food halls with outdoor dining, prepared food and produce boxes, and ghost kitchens to facilitate pick-up and delivery.

LU-8: Large Footprint Commercial. Revise the Zoning Ordinance to require new projects on large lots in the SPC zone to provide larger footprint commercial ground-floor spaces to accommodate a range of business types on the corridor, including uses with larger footprints and minimal structural columns.

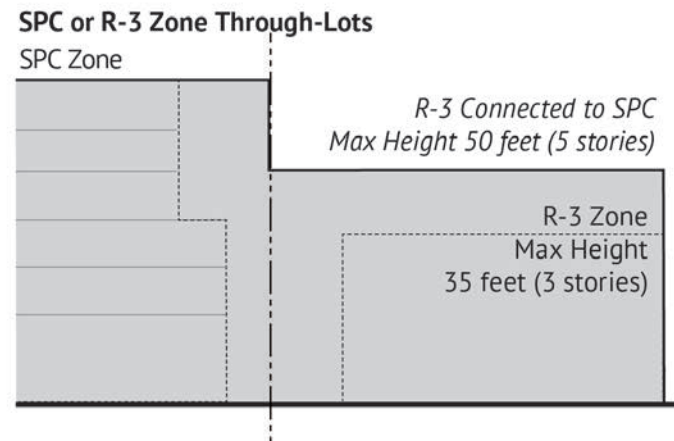
LU-9: Billboards and Wireless Facilities. Work with the City Attorney to evaluate the potential of policies to require removal of existing billboards over time. If necessary, encourage wireless communication facilities to be located on new structures and/or on poles in the public right-of-way rather than on existing structures.

Development Standards

LU-10: Density & Height Modifications. Modify SPC and R-3 zoning district standards in the Zoning Ordinance to support higher-density context-appropriate development. This should include:

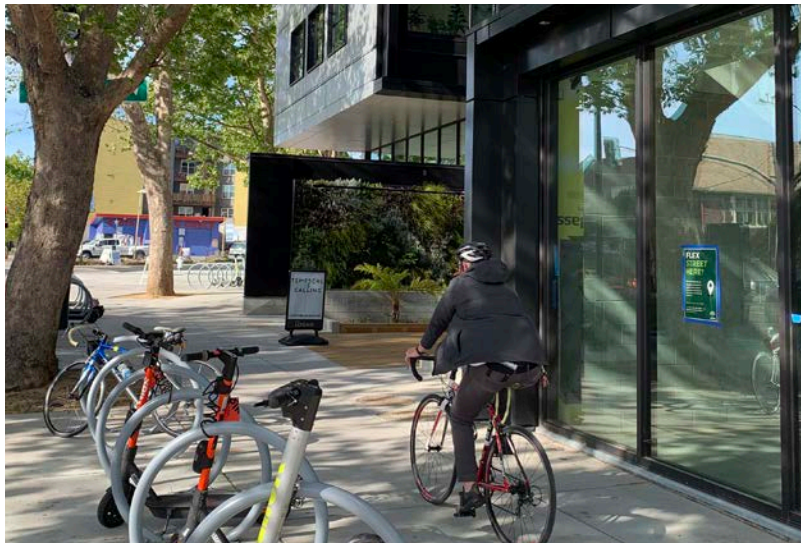
- increases in the building height limit
- increases in floor area ratio (FAR)
- elimination of maximum residential density as a standard
- replacement of daylight plane standards with stepback requirements
- incentives for lot consolidation in the form of additional building height and FAR
- reductions in open space requirements

For the purposes of determining residential capacity yield for the Housing Element or other regulatory requirements, the City may use a combination of FAR and average unit size (based on unit sizes in recent projects in Albany and neighboring cities), or similar proxy.

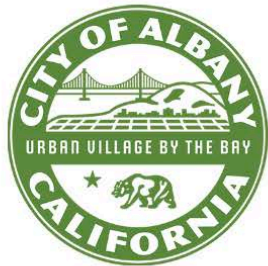


Provide an incentive for lot consolidation for contiguously-owned through-lots (i.e., that extend from San Pablo Avenue to Kains Avenue or Adams Street) by allowing modest increases in height and FAR within the R-3 district.

LU-11: Required Amenities. Require additional community amenities to support equity, livability, sustainability and placemaking. These benefits may include but are not limited to below-market rate inclusionary housing units, sustainability measures, and open space areas. The list of benefits shall be adopted by resolution and may be updated from time to time by the City Council. All projects shall be required to provide community benefits. Projects in the northern node that propose building height in excess of 68 feet and/or FAR in excess of 4.0 are required to provide additional benefits in exchange for the additional density.



All projects are required to provide community benefits. There are many amenities that support equity, livability, sustainability and placemaking and satisfy the requirements for community benefits. Placemaking features - such as landmarks, public art, unique signage, a special building design, or cluster of buildings - can build a sense of place. Community gathering spaces are desired as an amenity to foster community activity in the area.



San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Design Guidelines and Objective Standards

The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Design Guidelines and Objective Design Standards (a separate document) apply to new development on San Pablo Avenue.

CHAPTER 3:

URBAN DESIGN

Contents:

- Overview
- Context
- Applicability
- Nodes
- Guiding Principles

Overview

This Specific Plan supports transformation of the existing commercial corridor to enable an active, walkable, and attractive urban environment. Development can redefine the corridor with new buildings lining the street, a greater sense of place, and activity and public life along the ground floor.

This chapter outlines design guidelines that express the City's priorities for site and building design and establish the intent for objective standards in the Zoning Ordinance. The *San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Design Guidelines and Objective Standards* (a separate document) define future development in the Plan Area.

How do you know when have you arrived in Albany on San Pablo Avenue? Is there much of a difference between Albany, El Cerrito or Berkeley? Right now it is difficult to know that you have arrived in Albany, because there is a weak sense of place. It partly has to do with the width of the street and the low-density short buildings that line the edges of the street. The ratio of the building height to street width is much lower than 1:1 which is typical for cities around the world. A 1:3 ratio is often cited as the minimum ratio that establishes a sense of enclosure. San Pablo Avenue in many cases has a ratio of 1:4. Streets should be defined with appropriate building sizes.

A "sense of place" refers to the relationship between people and space in terms of knowing where you are (orientation), attraction to a place, and social connection (belonging). The urban form provides the setting for people to establish a sense of



place, with the design of the streetscape and framing buildings. The activation of the ground floor adjacent to the sidewalk and landmark features are also crucial as settings for social interaction. While buildings envisioned for the future may be taller, variety differentiates buildings from one another and establishes the “central spine” character for San Pablo Avenue.

Variation and distinctive features could occur in many forms: on the facade with bright colors, bold shapes, or high-quality materials; integrated into the design of the buildings with uniquely shaped buildings; through clusters of buildings around key intersections, such as Solano, Marin/Buchanan, or at University Village; with attractive landscaping and lighting; or memorable public art.

The Design Guidelines and Objective Standards anticipate the most concentrated and dense projects will define the “center” of Albany and create a lasting impression. That is why the guidelines and standards focus on the public realm and what the community sees and where people meet. The urbanization of San Pablo Avenue has many advantages that include attracting a larger residential population that support retail, restaurants, commercial services. New investment and the new population also helps to support public infrastructure, such as parks, transit and other services. New development on San Pablo Avenue presents an opportunity to provide “eyes on the street” for community safety and grow the social activity that leads to a sense of community and belonging.

Context

The *San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Design Guidelines and Objective Standards* supersede the San Pablo Avenue Design Guidelines prepared for the City of Albany in 1989. The 1989 San Pablo Avenue Design Guidelines largely addressed auto-oriented commercial uses and did not address mixed-use or multi-family housing that is anticipated for San Pablo Avenue. Relevant guidelines from the 1989 document have been incorporated into these design guidelines. In an effort to provide consistency with established practice, the design guidelines in this chapter build upon the City of Albany’s award-winning Residential Design Guidelines, adopted in 2018, which focused on single-family residential design.

Applicability

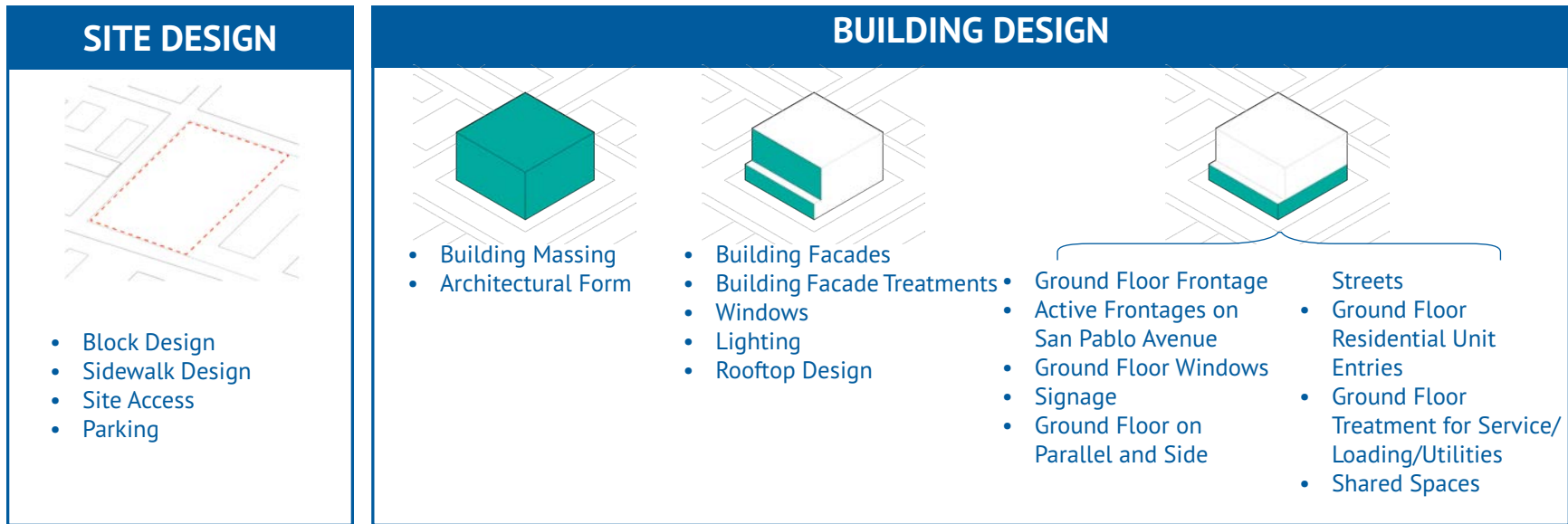
Design guidelines apply to new development projects going through the City’s design review process. This chapter is written for applicants, decision-makers, City staff, and community members to establish expectations for site and building design. Design guidelines primarily address new multi-family and mixed-use development and facade renovations of existing buildings. Existing businesses and properties making interior tenant improvements are not required to make upgrades in accordance with the guidelines.

Design guidelines identify the design intent behind detailed objective design standards. These objective design standards are required for projects with residential units pursuing streamlined review under State law. Other projects, including non-residential projects and discretionary housing projects, should meet objective standards, to the extent practicable.

Design guidelines address private development and apply to both site design and building design. Design guidelines define what is important in the public realm, which is generally, what the public sees and experiences.

- **Site Design** includes block design, sidewalk design, parking, and shared amenity spaces—elements that consider the ground plane of the parcel.
- **Building Design** addresses building massing, the street wall, building facade, the design of the ground floor and design for privacy and access to light and air.

Design guidelines and standards address the sidewalk area, but do not address street design and streetscape improvements beyond the curb. These components are under Caltrans’ jurisdiction and are subject to other planning and implementation efforts described in Chapter 4.



Nodes

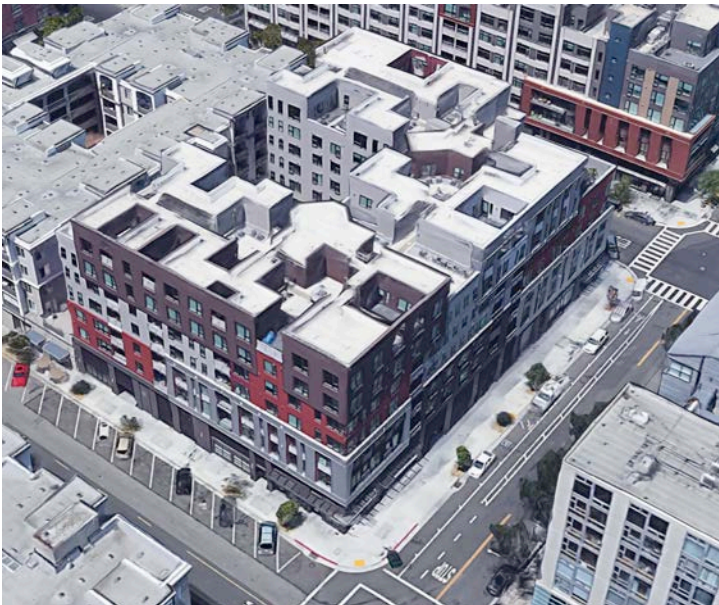
As outlined in Chapter 2, there are three nodes within the Planning Area (see Figure 3-1) that provide opportunities for distinctive features and activity that make them stand out amongst other parts of the corridor. Nodes are envisioned as focal points along San Pablo Avenue that define the identity of Albany and make it memorable. Nodes are part of the Gateways defined in the General Plan that define the City of Albany and should be designed to create a first impression and lasting image of a community. If designed and programmed well, nodes can be an anchor and regional draw for visitors outside of the City of Albany.

Currently, San Pablo Avenue is characterized by a mix of building styles, signage types, setbacks, and off-street parking. As San Pablo Avenue transforms, new development can better define the street, emphasizing nodes and improving the pedestrian experience. As stated in the General Plan's definition for major activity nodes, "The node areas are also priority areas for future capital investment in transit, streetscape improvements, public art, and other public realm improvements. They are particularly important to defining Albany's sense of place."

Nodes should contrast with the typical frontage on San Pablo Avenue, either because they are taller, bigger, or designed to attract activity and attention. Features that emphasize nodes may be landmarks, public art, unique signage, a special building design, or cluster of buildings, a commercial establishment, or a place for events and gatherings in a public space. There will still be neighborhood-serving establishments between the nodes. The two blocks or so around each node can establish a walkable distance that provides complementary and synergistic retail, services, and attractions.

FIGURE 3-1: THREE NODES





An example of the scale of development allowable at the Northern Node: "4th Street East" in Jack London Square, Oakland (KGY Architects)



*Examples of recently built multi-family housing on San Pablo Avenue in El Cerrito provide another reference for scale.
Top "Credence" 10300 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito.
Bottom: "Cerrito Vista" 10963 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito.*

Mid-block Passages

Mid-block passages improve walkability by creating more convenient routes to transit with neighborhood conveniences. Mid-block passages reduce large block sizes on through-lots. Figure 3-2 illustrates potential locations for mid-block passages. New mid-block connections should align with existing streets or passageways to complete the street grid. Passageways may have built space above or below the pedestrian surface.

FIGURE 3-2: POTENTIAL LOCATIONS OF MID-BLOCK PASSAGES





Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles establish the overarching vision for urban design and a framework for subsequent design guidelines and standards:

1. **New Building Types.** Transition San Pablo Avenue from a car-oriented commercial-focused environment to a walkable, transit-oriented, mixed-use boulevard with multi-family housing. This will mean a transition to taller buildings at nodes, higher density housing types, and an urban boulevard character over time.
2. **Convenient Walkable and Bikeable Community.** Create a compact, walkable, sustainable neighborhood that is well-served by and supportive of transit with neighborhood conveniences at nodes.
3. **Social Interaction.** Support activity along San Pablo Avenue by filling in gaps with new development, placing active uses at the ground level, adding new public spaces at nodes, and adding amenities, and extensions of the public realm all along San Pablo Avenue to encourage social interaction and to make the walking experience as interesting and complete as possible.
4. **Height & Mass Transitions.** Design thoughtful transitions between larger buildings and neighboring smaller buildings, keeping in mind privacy and access to the natural environment, such as backyards.
5. **Neighborhood Scale.** Maintain a neighborhood scale on Kains and Adams Street, the closest parallel streets to San Pablo Avenue. These narrower residential streets are distinct from San Pablo Avenue.
6. **Variety & Identity.** Allow variation for architectural expression without dictating a particular architectural style, and encouraging memorable, attractive, and identifiable design to renew the character of San Pablo Avenue where landmarks are the buildings themselves.



San Pablo Avenue at the University Village Shopping Area, looking north.

CHAPTER 4:

INFRASTRUCTURE & MOBILITY

Contents:

- Overview
- Water
- Sanitary Sewer
- Stormwater
- Electric, Gas, and Communications
- Waste and Recycling
- Public Safety
- Streets & Transportation
- Guiding Principles
- Implementing Policies

Overview

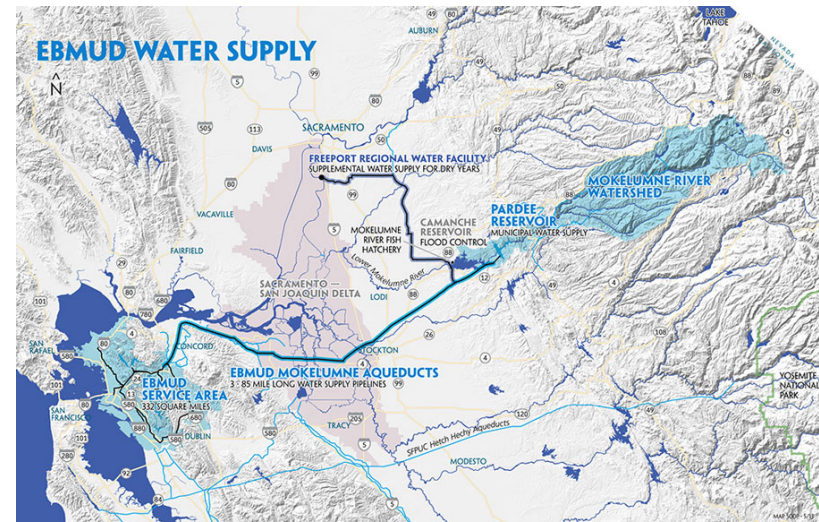
This chapter describes transportation and infrastructure systems, and analyzes changes in demand for these services that could be generated by new development. It identifies improvements required to serve new development or that can otherwise help support this Specific Plan's vision for revitalization. New policies and policies from existing adopted plans are included to provide direction for capital improvements and service delivery.

Water

The City of Albany water supply is provided by the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD). EBMUD's water system is primarily sourced by the Mokelumne River Watershed west of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. There is currently sufficient water capacity for the City and the development anticipated by this Specific Plan. However, the long-term adequacy of the water supply has been susceptible to the effects of climate change. Circumstances such as drought, emergency shortages, or the prior holder's water rights either upstream or downstream may affect the amount that can be distributed.

EBMUD has generally proposed programs for water recycling and conservation. This includes the East Bayshore Recycled Water Project, which requires a separate plumbing system that can supply reclaimed water for non-potable uses, such as toilet flushing and irrigation. Recently, EBMUD partnered with the City of Albany to install recycled water lines on Buchanan Street from Pierce Street to San Pablo Avenue.

The water system within the Planning Area includes pipelines located on either side of San Pablo Avenue. The western pipeline is 8 inches and the eastern pipeline varies in size from 4 to 8 inches. Adams Street also contains 6- to 8-inch lines, while Kains Avenue contains 4- to 6-inch lines. The 4-inch sections of pipeline on San Pablo Avenue and Kains Avenue will likely require upsizing to accommodate higher density multifamily housing with sufficient flows to serve fire hydrants. Typically, a new project would be responsible for upsizing the line between the two nearest intersections when the existing infrastructure cannot meet the demands of the new project. Based on the age and material of these particular 4-inch pipes, EBMUD is planning for replacement and upsizing. Future project sponsors are encouraged to meet with EBMUD staff early in the project development process to review requirements. Specific Plan policies support these upgrades.



California Green Building Standards Code (CalGreen) includes plumbing fixture maximum flow rate requirements that are intended to reduce water consumption for all residential and commercial buildings. These requirements include low flow fixture requirements for shower heads, lavatory and kitchen faucets, water closets and urinals. The City has gone a step further to amend the Green Building Code, requiring extra low flow kitchen faucets (1.5 gpm), 30% permeable paving, and a 12% reduction in water use for commercial buildings. The City's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance likewise calls for efficient irrigation systems for landscaping. As a result, new multifamily development tends to be substantially more water-efficient than older existing development on a per capita basis.

Sanitary Sewer

The City of Albany operates sewer pipeline that collects and conveys wastewater to EBMUD for processing and treatment. Treated wastewater is ultimately released to San Francisco Bay and the separated treated waste solids are beneficially reused to amend soils, use as feedstock for compost, or cover landfills. Wet weather contributes excess flows from storm drains and groundwater where water may enter the sewer system through broken pipes. This poses a concern for EBMUD's infrastructure capacity. When the North Interceptor trunk sewer exceeds capacity, flows may be diverted to EBMUD's wet weather facility at Point Isabel in Richmond for storage and/or discharge. The City has been working with EBMUD to rehabilitate and replace vulnerable segments of pipeline to reduce infiltration and inflows during storms.

Within the Planning Area, the sewer collection system consists of portions owned by either the City of Albany or the City of Berkeley. There are Berkeley dedicated trunk sewers that flow westerly along Washington Avenue and Portland Avenue before weaving through the San Pablo Avenue corridor in a northerly direction, ultimately connecting to a jointly-owned 42-inch sewer main at the northern end of Adams Street. The Berkeley-owned sewer lines cannot be connected to within the City of Albany. Adams Street and San Pablo Avenue have continuous lengths of existing sanitary sewer infrastructure, whereas Kains Avenue has five (5) locations where the sanitary sewer mains stop short of the street intersection.

EBMUD is anticipated to have adequate dry weather capacity to accept wastewater flows from the planned buildout of this Specific Plan. Wet weather flows may also be accommodated with implementation of ongoing local and regional programs to reduce infiltration and inflow during wet weather events. The infrastructure analysis completed for this Specific Plan did not identify any required sanitary sewer improvements, beyond localized frontage improvements for new developments.

Stormwater

The City of Albany stormwater system collects rainfall runoff from the local watershed and ultimately discharges to the San Francisco Bay. Albany also has natural creeks that flow through the Planning Area. The City of Albany is one of many municipalities that is mandated by the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Regional Permit (MRP) to implement provisions intended to protect natural waterways and manage stormwater runoff resulting from urbanization.

Provision C.3 of the MRP requires permittees to place conditions on development projects to incorporate site design measures, source controls, treatment measures and flow duration controls (on larger projects). Due to the Alameda County C.3 Stormwater requirements, any project creating or replacing over 10,000 square feet of impervious surface will be required to incorporate stormwater management measures. Low-impact design (LID) measures to increase stormwater runoff quality include, but are not limited to, pervious paving bioretention areas, green roofs and flow-through planters. These measures can also improve water quality entering the creeks and the Bay.

The vast majority of the Planning Area is currently impervious surface. By incorporating these C.3 and LID measures on required projects, the imperviousness of the San Pablo Avenue corridor will likely decrease, resulting in a reduction in the amount of stormwater runoff. For this reason, upsizing the existing storm drainage infrastructure is not anticipated to be necessary to accommodate this Specific Plan. However, there may be new localized infrastructure, pipe upsizing, or relocation needed depending on the needs of each future individual development. This is a typical requirement along the frontage of new projects. There may be main locations identified as needing repair or replacement by the City in the future as identified in the Watershed Management Plan update.

Electric, Gas, and Communications

Natural gas and electrical service for the City of Albany is provided by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). There is also telecom (cable and internet) service throughout the Planning Area. Electrical systems within the Planning Area have mainly been undergrounded, as a result of the Marin Utility Undergrounding District and implementation of the Marin Bikeway Phase III project, which involved digging up the street. Most overhead electrical lines are located within the cross streets and on Kains Avenue and Adams Street. It is expected that PG&E will accommodate the electrical and gas demands of the Specific Plan. A new service application submitted to PG&E will be required to trigger a review of added electrical and natural gas demand for each new individual development. Likewise existing telecom infrastructure and providers are expected to be able to accommodate development that may be generated by the Specific Plan.

East Bay Community Energy (EBCE) is a local public agency tasked with supplying clean electricity at low rates to customers in Alameda County. EBCE procures electricity and provides local renewable resources, while PG&E continues to administer natural gas service as well as energy transmission, distribution, repair, customer service, and billing for EBCE customers. Through partnerships with EBCE and other regional bodies, the City aims to transition to all-electric commercial and residential spaces.

Waste and Recycling

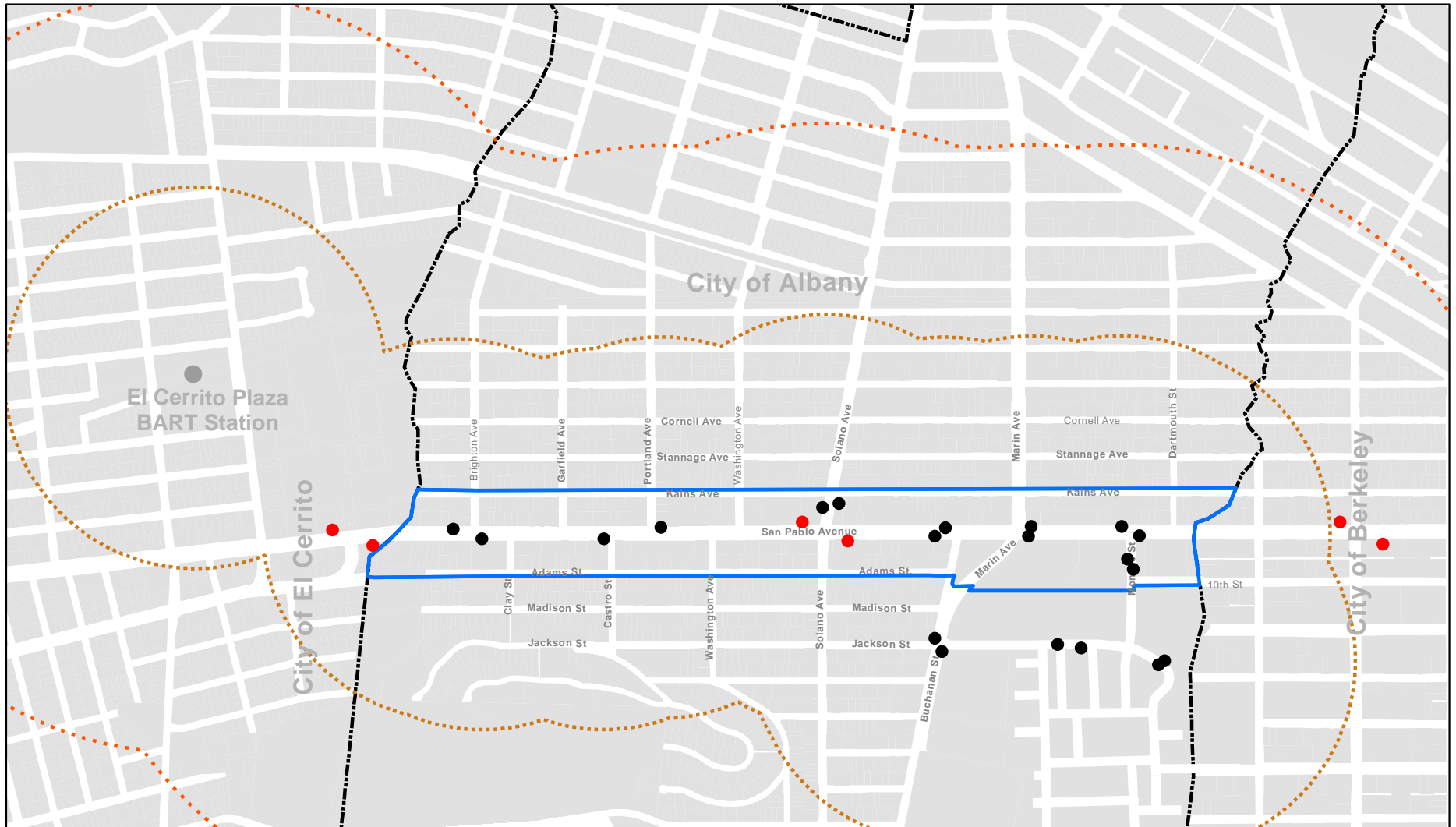
The City of Albany's waste, recycling, and organics streams are hauled and processed by Waste Management of Alameda County (WMAC) through an exclusive franchise agreement. Existing hauling services and waste processing facilities in the County should be able to accommodate waste generated by new development and increased population density as a result of the Specific Plan. The City also partners with StopWaste, the Alameda County Waste Management Authority, to enforce state and local waste reduction ordinances such as the Organics Reduction and Recycling Ordinance, and increase access to proper materials management education and outreach.

Public Safety

Taller buildings present operational challenges for fire fighters and other emergency responders. Emergency access to future taller buildings would be improved with an aerial ladder apparatus that extends to 100 feet or more, allowing direct access to the higher levels of buildings. An update to the City's development impact fee program can include a fee on new development that contributes to the cost of new fire department apparatus.

Regardless of the apparatus, new construction in the Specific Plan area will comply with California and City Building and Fire Codes, which specify requirements such as fire alarm systems, fire sprinkler systems, fire protection water supplies, apparatus access to buildings, firefighter roof access, emergency exit ways for occupants, and elevators sized to accommodate ambulance gurneys.


FIGURE 4-1: TRANSIT STOPS



● AC Transit Local Stops	□ SPA Plan Boundary	○ 1/4-Mile
● AC Transit Rapid Bus 72R Stops	□ City Limits	○ 1/2-Mile
● BART Stations		

Radius from BART and SPA Bus Stops:

N



0 500 1,000

Feet

Streets & Transportation

The availability of reliable and safe multimodal transportation, including walking, biking, and transit facilities, is essential to support the development and success of higher density housing and mixed use development, and to reduce the reliance on driving. The transportation analysis evaluating this Specific Plan did not identify any specific facilities or improvements required to meet Specific Plan needs. Rather, this Specific Plan supports implementation of the City's adopted plans and the County's ongoing efforts for multimodal improvements on the corridor.

Additionally, this chapter discusses changes in vehicle and bicycle parking requirements, and transit incentives, to encourage a variety of alternative modes and reduce development costs. Also, as described in previous chapters, new guidelines and standards support reducing block lengths, through new cut-through paths, to increase pedestrian connections to housing and services.

San Pablo and Buchanan Complete Streets Report

In 2013, Albany prepared a Complete Streets conceptual plan for San Pablo Avenue and Buchanan Street to expand multimodal access. Out of the conceptual planning, the City developed a project that focused on pedestrian and bicycle crossing safety improvements. In 2018 and 2019, the City prepared construction plans, specifications, and estimates to construct the following improvements:

- Crosswalk Improvements Across San Pablo Avenue: Crosswalk enhancements at each intersection between Washington Avenue and Brighton Avenue and improvements to the bicycle boulevard crossing at Washington Avenue. As of this writing in 2022, funding has been programmed to complete the intersection improvements north of Washington Avenue.



Complete Streets Plan, 2013

- Bicycle Facilities on Low Speed Streets: Bicycle routes on the parallel streets of Kains Avenue and Adams Street. Construction documents have been developed after an extensive planning process. The possibility of bicycle and transit facilities on San Pablo Avenue is part of ongoing corridor-wide efforts, as described below.
- Bike and Pedestrian Improvements at UC Village: Additional City efforts at the conceptual stage for San Pablo Avenue include bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements at the Marin Avenue/San Pablo Avenue intersection; connecting the existing cycletrack on San Pablo Avenue between Dartmouth and north of Monroe to the Buchanan Bikeway; and bicycle crossing improvements at the Dartmouth HAWK signal. The City is also working with UC on conceptual plans for bicycle facilities along Jackson Street to connect to the Adams Street route to the north and the 9th Street route to the south in Berkeley.

SAN PABLO AVE NEAR-TERM BUS/BIKE PROJECT : BIKE NETWORK IN ALBANY



San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project



Bicycle Network Designation

- Existing/In-Development Bikeway
- Near-Term Parallel Route
- Parallel Route to be Implemented/Upgraded by Near-Term Bus/Bike Project

Intersection Improvements

- To be Implemented/Upgraded by Near-Term Bus/Bike Project
- In-Development by Other Projects along Near-Term Parallel Route

Source: ACTC Corridor Project Status, October 26, 2021

Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC) San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project

ACTC's San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project is a multi-jurisdiction effort to develop a long-term vision and near-term improvements for San Pablo Avenue that will allow it to function better and more safely for people who walk, bike, drive and take transit.

Phase 1, which concluded in 2020, identified and refined potential long-term concepts for the corridor through extensive outreach and technical analysis. Due to the complex and constrained nature of the corridor, 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. In response to strong desire from Alameda CTC, cities, AC Transit and communities to advance a project that begins to address needs in corridor – in particular improvements to make buses more reliable and improve safety for people walking and bicycling. Phase 2 will further develop multiple project alternatives for bus and cycling facilities on San Pablo Avenue while advancing several near-term improvement projects that will improve safety and evaluate the effectiveness of different treatments.

- Transit Reliability: AC Transit completed designs for the deployment of GPS-enabled transit signal priority as part of their San Pablo Avenue Rapid Corridors Upgrade project. This project will reduce bus delay and provide more-convenient and reliable bus service along San Pablo Avenue.
- Dedicated Transit Facilities: ACTC is also studying the feasibility of dedicated bus lanes through Albany and throughout the corridor. As part of the near-term improvements, ACTC is developing plans for in-lane boarding platforms at the San Pablo Avenue/Solano Avenue Rapid stops.
- Bicycle Facilities: The City will be installing a pilot two-way shared-lane bicycle facility along Kains Ave and Adams St. At present, ACTC is developing near-term improvements on routes parallel to San Pablo Avenue. ACTC is still studying the potential for dedicated bicycle facilities on San Pablo Avenue in Albany and throughout the regional corridor. One the one hand, these side

streets have strong advantages as bicycle facilities generally, and bicycle routes specifically. Bicyclists can utilize the entire roadway, as a shared facility, and they can more easily make left- and right-hand turns. Traffic volumes and speeds are also much lower on these parallel facilities. The downside is that destinations and transit connections are more typically found on San Pablo Avenue.

Albany Active Transportation Plan

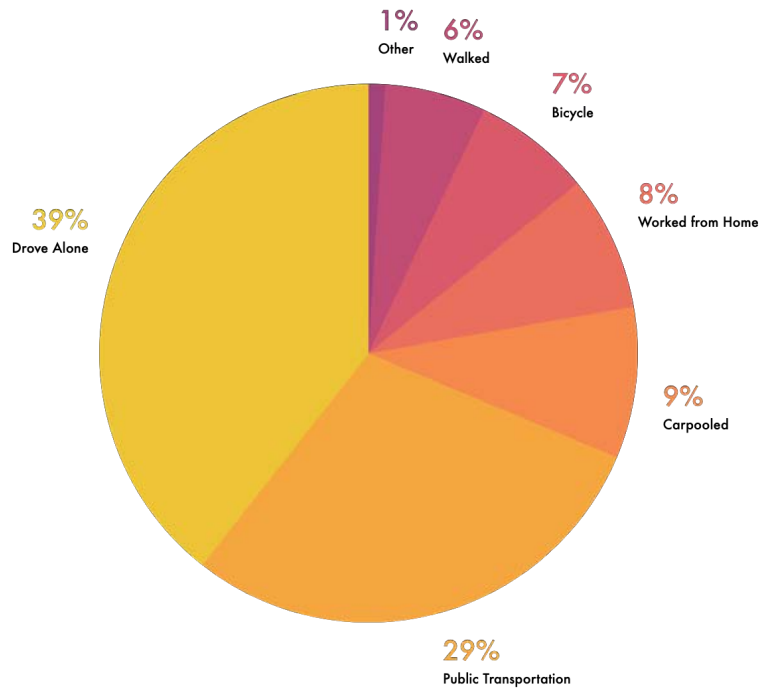
The Active Transportation Plan combines the City's previous bicycle and pedestrian master plans to establish a vision for improvements citywide. The Corridor Plan described above represents the most up-to-date programs and projects for the Specific Plan Planning Area. However, the Active Transportation Plan provides useful context and analysis for this Specific Plan.

It identifies one of the greatest challenges for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles, on San Pablo Avenue, which is the lack of visibility of a pedestrian crossing multiple lanes of fast-moving vehicle traffic at unsignalized intersections. Despite having the right-of-way, pedestrians have to wait for a gap in traffic and proceed with caution before entering the intersection. Additionally, this Specific Plan implements updates to the San Pablo Design Guidelines in accordance with the following action:

Active Transportation Plan Action 3.4-A: Update the San Pablo Design Guidelines and San Pablo Streetscape Master Plan to reflect the City's desire to create a walking-, bicycling- and transit-oriented environment.

An update to the Active Transportation Plan is anticipated in the near term.

FIGURE 4-2: MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK (ALBANY, CA)



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates Subject Tables (ID #S0801)

Parking for Bikes and Cars

Vehicle parking is a major driver in site planning and achieving the maximum density attainable. As part of the Specific Plan planning process, City staff and consultants tested changes in parking standards to understand their effects on potential development yield. The Specific Plan calls for reduced parking requirements by establishing a maximum parking requirement and no minimum requirement. These revised parking standards allow for more flexibility at the ground-level, improving site circulation, and reducing development costs.

In parallel, this Specific Plan supports other travel modes by adding bicycle parking requirements and transit incentives, and allowing the conversion of parking areas in the future, if they are no longer needed. Albany already enjoys high rates of travel by non-vehicular modes. As shown in Chart 4-1, among Albany residents commuting to work in 2019 (pre-pandemic), 29% took public transit, 9% carpooled, 7% biked, and 6% walked. Moreover, electric bikes and longer bikes (e.g., cargo bikes, bikes with trailers) have become more prevalent in recent years for both individuals and families. The Specific Plan responds to this trend and accommodates these bicycle types, by expanding bike parking regulations to require electrical outlets for electric bike charging and racks that accommodate longer and heavier bikes.

Electric Vehicle Charging

California has an objective that all new cars and passenger trucks sold in California must be zero emission vehicles by 2035 (Executive Order N-79-20). Albany is leading the way, with substantially higher rates of electric vehicle adoption compared to the Bay Area-wide average, according to DMV records and the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan. Additionally, this Plan requires a portion of bike parking be available for electric bicycles with built-in charging ports.

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles, which are rooted in General Plan policies, establish the intent for the infrastructure and mobility policies:

- 1. Grow Infrastructure with Development Needs.** Provide water, sewer, storm drain, street, energy, and telecommunication facilities that are safe, reliable, well-maintained, efficient, sustainable, and responsive to current and projected needs. (General Plan Goal CSF-6)
- 2. Ensure Public Safety.** Meet increase in police and fire service demand as a result of new development. (General Plan Policy CSF-2.1)
- 3. Travel Choices.** Provide the opportunity to safely and conveniently travel using a variety of travel modes, including walking, bicycling, and public transportation as well as driving. (General Plan Goal T-3)
- 4. Pedestrian & Bicyclist Safety.** Improve the safety of all modes of travel, taking particular care to reduce the rate of injury accidents for bicycles and pedestrians. (General Plan Goal T-4)

Implementing Policies

Infrastructure

INF-1: Water. Encourage and coordinate with EBMUD to move forward with planning efforts to install recycled water pipes, and to replace and upsize aging 4-inch water lines on the eastern side of San Pablo Avenue and along Kains Avenue, as appropriate.

INF-2: Sewer. The City will continue to coordinate with EBMUD on the safe treatment and disposal of Albany's wastewater.

INF-3: On-Site Stormwater Management. Individual projects should use stormwater management as a key part of initial site planning. The City shall require C.3 stormwater forms and plans for stormwater management at plan intake, to the extent feasible and consistent with State law requirements for project submittal.

INF-4: Green Stormwater Infrastructure. The City shall explore opportunities for green stormwater infrastructure, such as swales, planters, and other storm drain improvements to expand capacity and improve stormwater management on San Pablo Avenue.

INF-5: Climate-Adaptive Landscaping. As envisioned in the City's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, promote use of climate-adaptive plants in existing and new landscapes to reduce water use. Project sponsors shall continue to meet Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance requirements.

INF-6: Storm Drain Access. The City shall work with private property owners who have City storm drain facilities on their properties to obtain utility access easements. To facilitate redevelopment of these sites, the City will need to work with these property owners to either reroute storm drains, identify "no build" areas, or otherwise allow access.

INF-7: Electric, Gas, and Communications. New development projects shall underground existing overhead utility lines along a parcel's street frontage, consistent with current City standards. Transformers and other electric utilities required for future development projects should be located in vaults underground or inside structures, if necessary.

INF-8: All-Electric Construction. As envisioned in the City's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, pursue regulations to require all-electric buildings for new construction and major renovations of existing buildings.

INF-9: Public Safety. Continue to require Fire and Police Department review of major development projects to ensure that they meet code requirements and emergency response needs (Policy CSF-2.10). Update capital facilities fee to include a fee on new development that contributes to the cost of new fire department apparatus.

Streets & Transportation

MOB-1: Bike Parking Standards. Revise bike parking standards, including standards for long-tail and electric bikes, in the Zoning Ordinance, to encourage convenient bike access and accommodate households that prefer travel by bicycle.

MOB-2: Residential Vehicle Parking Standards. Reduce residential vehicle parking requirements in the Zoning Ordinance to allow flexibility in parking configuration and respond to changes in parking demand over time. Add loading spaces, incentives for transit use, and improved bicycle facilities to encourage other modes of travel (see related policies below). Encourage unbundling of parking leases from rents. In cases where there are fewer parking spaces than dwelling units, the parking spaces may be offered first to the renters of affordable dwelling units and second to renters of market rate units.

MOB-3: Commercial Parking Standards. Within the SPC Zone, revise commercial vehicle parking standards to create blended rates. In accordance with General Plan Action LU-3.C: Commercial Parking Studies, evaluate commercial parking requirements to ensure that they

are consistent with national best practices, support shared parking and car-sharing programs, and contribute to local sustainability objectives.

MOB-4: Loading. Encourage loading spaces in front of new residential and mixed-use development. Allow short-term parking for deliveries, shared vehicles, and Transportation Network Company (TNC), such as Uber and Lyft, in on-street loading spaces, including on San Pablo Avenue.

MOB-5: Adams Street North Terminus. The City will continue to pursue opportunities for connecting Adams Street cycling facilities with Carlson Boulevard to the north. Such improvements could be implemented in coordination with a future development project, should the Sutter East Bay Medical Center property redevelop.

MOB-6: Cycletrack Network. New construction projects on UC Village and Gill Tract properties undertaken by UC Berkeley should be responsible for closing the gap in the San Pablo Avenue cycletrack from Village Creek to Marin Avenue by extending the cycletrack on the west side of San Pablo Avenue.

MOB-7: Transit Passes. Revise the Zoning Ordinance to require that developers of new housing and residential mixed use projects provide free transit passes for residents.

MOB-8: Transit Level of Service. Project applicants and the City should consider level of service for transit operations during project review to support transit use and address potential impacts.

MOB-9: Transportation Demand Management. The City should update its Transportation Demand Management program to reduce reliance on driving and expand incentives and opportunities for walking, biking, and transit.

MOB-10: ACTC Coordination. The City will continue to coordinate with ACTC on the Corridor Plan to balance this Specific Plan's mobility and land use policies with evolving plans for on-street bicycle and transit infrastructure.



View on San Pablo Avenue in Albany, looking south.

CHAPTER 5:

IMPLEMENTATION

Contents:

- Overview
- Entitlement Process
- Environmental (CEQA) Review
- Phasing
- City Responsibilities for Implementation
- Implementing Policies

Overview

This chapter serves two key purposes to facilitate implementation of this Specific Plan. First, it guides developers and property owners on the process and requirements for entitling and building development projects in accordance with the plan. This includes expectations for the zoning approval and building permit process, CEQA review, and development fees. Second, it provides guidance to City staff, community members and decision-makers about how to review individual development applications, implement City programs and policies, and monitor the success of plan implementation.

Entitlement Process

Development projects in the Planning Area typically require two phases of review and approval: the zoning permits/design review phase and the building permit phase.

Zoning Permits & Design Review

During the entitlement phase, project sponsors submit applications for review by City staff to determine whether the proposed project is consistent with the General Plan, Specific Plan, and other associated regulatory requirements including the Zoning Ordinance. Planning fees are required during this initial submittal.

Uses that are permitted by right in a zoning district or where only a minor conditional use permit is required may only require review by City staff to ensure compliance with adopted regulations. On the other hand, major conditional use permits require review by the Planning Commission. Most projects, including new residential and mixed-use projects, require design review by the Planning Commission, even if the underlying use is permitted by right. Projects proposed under State Density Bonus Law require a recommendation by the Planning Commission, but final approval by the City Council. Specifics are further outlined in the Zoning Ordinance.

Building Permits

Following zoning approval, project sponsors submit detailed building permit applications, which are reviewed by several departments including Building, Planning, Engineering, and Fire prior to approval and permit issuance. Building permit fees and development impact fees are required with this submittal. The City also issues permits to allow on-street loading zones.

Caltrans Encroachment Permits

Caltrans requires encroachment permits for new curb cuts on San Pablo Avenue. The City encourages applicants to meet with Caltrans early on during project design regarding details such as sight distance requirements (i.e., striping, tree locations), street tree species, garage gate locations, and garbage/recycling pick-up locations.

Development Fees

Development impact fees are an essential part of the City's revenue generation to cover the costs of capital projects. They are also a factor in the financial feasibility of development projects. In general, the City assesses residential projects on a per unit basis, scaling up fees

TABLE 5-1: SITES SUBJECT TO GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 65962.5 (CORTESE LIST)

SITE/LOCATION	SUMMARY OF CONTAMINANTS AND CLEAN-UP STATUS
Plaza Car Wash 400 San Pablo Ave.	Documentation of petrochemicals including diesel, gasoline, tetrachloroethylene, trichloroethylene related to underground storage tanks, extraction wells, and dry cleaner operation. Monitoring and sampling is underway to determine whether the contaminant plume is decreasing and stable, and to support a path toward case closure. Status = Open - Verification Monitoring
Albany Hill Mini Mart 800 San Pablo Ave.	Soil and groundwater beneath the site have been contaminated by fuel hydrocarbons that leaked from the underground storage tank system. A plume of contaminated groundwater containing dissolved fuel hydrocarbons and the fuel oxygenate MTBE has migrated from the service station more than 100 feet to the north. Groundwater contamination also extends off-site to the south and west. Based on the site conditions, the off-site groundwater contamination does not exceed levels that would pose a potential health risk for indoor air intrusion to residences or commercial buildings. Status = Open - Verification Monitoring
Formerly Exxon 990 San Pablo Ave.	Concentrations of diesel, gasoline, and benzene have been detected in the groundwater at this former gas station site. Since 2008, groundwater monitoring wells have been installed at the site and additional soil bores have been drilled to define the extent of groundwater, soil, soil vapor contamination at the site and vicinity. Soil Vapor Extraction (SVE) wells were installed for the purpose of remediating the site. The SVE system has been in continuous operation since February 2018. Initial assessments in 2021 report that the petroleum hydrocarbon concentrations in soil vapor and groundwater have decreased and stabilized. Status = Open - Assessment & Interim Remedial Action

Source: State Water Resources Control Board, Geotracker. <<https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov>> Accessed November 16, 2021.

based on the size of the units (which allows for some economies of scale for multifamily projects). Additionally, planning and zoning fees may be reduced for affordable housing units. A comprehensive update to development impact fees began in 2022.

Hazardous Materials Mitigation

Several sites in the Planning Area are listed as open cases on hazardous materials databases compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 (Cortese List), as shown in Table 5-1. If redevelopment takes place on these sites, it will need to follow specific regulations, summarized below and subject to compliance with State regulations. Subsurface contamination can add to the cost of development and environmental review. To streamline CEQA analysis and project review, require a soil and groundwater management plan for open Cortese list sites (see Policy IMP-1C).

Environmental (CEQA) Review

This Specific Plan is accompanied by an Addendum to the General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) which evaluates whether the Specific Plan proposes any changes to the approved General Plan that would result in any new or substantially more adverse significant effects or require any new mitigation measures not identified in the General Plan EIR. The General Plan assumed 475 multifamily housing units in the Planning Area and 440 jobs (approximately 165,000 sq. ft. of non-residential building area). By comparison, this Specific Plan accommodates more housing units but fewer jobs and less commercial floor area: approximately 1,160 units and 45,000 net new square feet as part of mixed-use development. This shift in land use equates to a loss of 239,000 square feet of hypothetical commercial area compared to the General Plan, which includes both physical commercial space lost due to new housing as well as commercial space planned for in the General Plan and General Plan EIR.

As a result, individual projects that are consistent with this Specific Plan qualify for a statutory exemption under CEQA. From the project sponsor's

standpoint, once consistency is determined, no additional CEQA review is required.

The City, as lead agency, must determine whether any of the circumstances in Public Resources Code Section 21166 are present and require further environmental review. Namely, have there been substantial changes proposed in an individual project or implementation program resulting from this Specific Plan or to the circumstances under which the project or program is being undertaken that will require major revisions to the General Plan EIR. Or, if new information that was not known and could not have been known at the time the General Plan EIR was certified becomes available, then the exemption may not apply unless a supplemental EIR is certified.

Phasing

The Planning Area is anticipated to redevelop gradually over an approximate 20-year timeframe, given the site constraints and market conditions, including high land and construction costs. As a result, a detailed phasing plan has not been developed. Residential demand is likely to continue to be high in the near term, but will be subject to feasibility of market conditions, in particular the high costs of construction.

City Responsibilities for Implementation

Many of the policies in this Specific Plan rely on investment by the private sector to build housing and related improvements to the public realm. However, the City is responsible for setting up the planning, infrastructure, and incentive framework for facilitating these private investments. Table 5-2 summarizes policies from the preceding chapters that require City initiative. Additionally, the implementation plan recommends periodic monitoring and evaluation of the success of the Specific Plan to identify plan modifications or additional programs.

TABLE 5-2: IMPLEMENTATION TASKS AND TIMING FOR CITY STAFF/DEPARTMENTS

TASK	SHORT-TERM (0-5 Years)	MEDIUM-TERM (5-10 Years)	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	DETAILED ACTIONS
Revise Development Standards (Chapter 2 Policies)	✓		Planning Division	Adopt simultaneously with Specific Plan
Add Objective Design Standards (Chapter 3 Policies)	✓		Planning Division	Adopt simultaneously with Specific Plan
Development Impact Fee Update	✓		City Manager's Office	Update impact fees to support improvements to parks and recreation, other government facilities, and police and fire facilities, including a fee for new development to support the cost of new fire apparatus
Amortize Billboards (Policy LU-9)	✓	✓	Planning Division	Pursue amortization of billboards in the short-term though removal may require longer term implementation
Coordinate with EBMUD on Upgrades to Water Infrastructure (Policy INF-1)	✓	✓	Public Works	Encourage prioritization of upgrades to 4-in water lines
Update TDM Program (Policy MOB-9)	✓		Transportation Division	Update TDM Program to provide incentives for alternative travel modes
Coordinate with ACTC on Evolving Corridor Plans (Policy MOB-10)	✓	✓	Transportation Division	Advocate City's position on location for bicycle facilities and other improvements
On-Street Parking Monitoring and Evaluation (Chapter 4 MOB Policies)		✓	Transportation Division	Identify deficiencies and optimize efficiency to 85% on-street occupancy. Consider adjustments to pricing, off-street standards, or other strategies such as residential permit programs (see text box on the following page)
Plan Monitoring and Evaluation		✓	Planning Division	Evaluate whether Specific Plan is meeting vision and guiding principles; assess unit and retail floor area creation; quality of design; and achievement of public amenities (see text box on the following page)

Considerations for Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Is the vision of the Specific Plan generally being met?
- Are the guiding principles of the Land Use, Urban Design, and Infrastructure/Mobility chapters generally being met?
- How many units and commercial square footage is being created? (Annually? Every 5 years?)
- Have the implementation steps in Table 5-2 been initiated or completed?
- Conduct post-occupancy studies of on- and off-site parking.

Implementing Policies

The following policies shall be added as conditions of approval to projects within the Planning Area to reduce potential impacts during construction. These conditions of approval may be amended from time to time, by resolution.

IMP-1: Conditions of Approval. Augment standard conditions of approval for projects in the Planning Area as follows in order to clarify requirements for applicants and streamline the development process on sites which contain specific potential hazards. To demonstrate compliance with State laws requiring objective standards, knowable at the time of application, standard conditions of approval should be adopted by resolution. Conditions of approval, which may be amended from time to time by resolution, are as follows:

Based on feedback from tribal consultation, add condition of approval IMP-1D to strengthen General Plan EIR Mitigation Measure CULT-1a: IMP-1-D. Cultural Resources Directory. To strengthen General Plan EIR Mitigation Measure CULT 1a, require that the applicant review the most recent and updated Northwest Information Center (NWIC) list, Historic Property Directory, to determine if known archaeological and paleontological sites underlie the proposed project. All other stipulations of Mitigation Measure CULT-1a remain in effect.

IMP-1A. Construction GHG Emissions. To achieve State goals for greenhouse gas emissions reduction, projects are encouraged to incorporate the following best management practices, from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, to reduce GHG emissions during construction: use of alternative fueled (e.g., biodiesel or electric) construction vehicles/equipment, use of local building materials, and recycle or reuse at least 50 percent of construction waste or demolition materials.

IMP-1B. Construction Noise. The City shall not permit pile driving within the Planning Area. Alternative methods shall be employed if proposed structures require deep footings, including but not limited to helical piles, rammed aggregate pier system, press-in piling, or screw cast-in-place piles.

IMP-1C. Soil and Groundwater Management Plan. A Soil and Groundwater Management Plan (SGMP) shall be submitted to the City for all non-residential projects, and residential or mixed-use projects with five or more dwelling units that are (1) located on a site identified as open on the Cortese list; and (2) propose any excavations deeper than 5 feet below grade. The SGMP shall be site specific and include the following:

- a) Identification of pollutants, disposal methods, guidance on managing odors during excavation, and permits required to comply with all applicable local, state and regional requirements.
- b) Notification to the City of any hazardous materials found in soils and groundwater during development.
- c) The name and phone number of the individual responsible for implementing the SGMP. Contact information for the person responding to community questions or concerns shall be posted at the project site during construction.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A. Summary of Key Zoning Standards
- Appendix B. Zoning Ordinance Modifications (Redlines)
- Appendix C. General Plan Modifications (Redlines)
- Appendix D. Relevant General Plan Goals and Policies
- Appendix E. Financing Strategies

Appendix A. Summary of Key Zoning Standards

For the convenience of property owners, developers, and architects, the table below identifies development standards that were adopted at the time of approval of this Specific Plan in 2022. Standards may be modified from time to time. For the most up-to-date requirements, please refer to the Zoning Ordinance.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS WITHIN THE SAN PABLO AVENUE SPECIFIC PLAN AREA

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD	SPC	R-3
Minimum Density (du/acre)	30	N/A
Maximum Density (du/acre)	N/A	63
Maximum FAR	4.0 4.5, northern node	1.5 2.0, through-lots to San Pablo Ave.
Maximum Height (feet)	68 85, northern node	35 50, through-lots to San Pablo Ave.
Upper Story Stepbacks	Yes, when abutting residential district	
Maximum Lot Coverage (Multiple-Family)	100%	70%
Minimum Setbacks (Feet)		
Front	0	15
Side, Interior	0 5, when abutting residential district	5
Side, Exterior	0	7.5
Minimum Rear	0	15
Minimum Open Space (sf/unit)	100	
Vehicle Parking		
Minimum (space/unit)	0	
Maximum (space/unit)	1	
Bike Parking		
Minimum (protected space/unit)	1 (including 10% for large bikes and 10% electric bikes)	

Appendix B. Zoning Ordinance Modifications (Redlines)

See Staff Report & Attachments

Appendix C. General Plan Modifications (Redlines)

See Staff Report & Attachments

Appendix D.

Relevant General Plan Policies

The following General Plan policies establish the basis for the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan. This Specific Plan provides detailed policies and zoning amendments to achieve these objectives.

Policy LU-1.1: New Housing Opportunities

Create opportunities to meet the housing needs of current and future Albany residents by zoning land for a variety of housing types, particularly on underutilized commercial properties. To the extent possible, new development throughout the city should be leveraged to create on-site and off-site opportunities for housing serving very low, low, and moderate income households.

Policy LU-1.3: Business Districts

Maintain and enhance San Pablo and Solano Avenues as Albany's principal commercial streets. Encourage a vibrant mix of ground floor retail and service uses that meet the needs of Albany residents, enhance the local tax base, provide job opportunities, and provide a safe, walkable environment.

Policy LU-1.8: Transit-Oriented Development

Encourage land use patterns that support transit use, including additional mixed use (commercial and higher-density residential) development along the San Pablo and Solano Avenue corridors.

Policy LU-1.9: Income Diversity

Recognize economic and income diversity as one of Albany's greatest strengths. Ensure that future land use decisions contribute to this diversity by creating housing and employment opportunities for persons of all incomes and backgrounds.

Policy LU-2.2: Mixed Density Areas

In areas designated for high and medium density residential uses, ensure that new development is designed to minimize sharp contrasts in height, prevent the loss of sunlight and privacy for adjacent homes, and provide buffering and screening from nearby lower density uses.

Policy LU-2.3: Design Guidelines

Maintain residential design guidelines and design review procedures that promote the compatibility of residential alterations and additions with existing homes and that strive to reduce impacts on neighboring properties. The guidelines should be used to encourage high-quality, visually distinctive architecture, and the use of durable, attractive construction materials.

Policy LU-2.8: Kains Avenue and Adams Street

Maintain Kains Avenue and Adams Street as predominantly residential streets. Land use regulations should limit the encroachment of commercial uses onto parcels that are currently developed with housing. Residential uses along these streets and in adjacent areas should be protected from the potential adverse impacts of commercial uses through special setback requirements. The use of these two streets for primary access to non-residential uses shall be discouraged or prohibited as appropriate.

Policy LU-3.1: Mixed Use Development

Encourage mixed use development combining residential uses above ground floor commercial uses along the San Pablo and Solano Avenue corridors. The City's zoning regulations should continue to provide floor area ratio (FAR) incentives for projects that include multi-family residential uses on the upper stories. State density bonus provisions for affordable housing may be used to allow floor area bonuses above and beyond those provided by the City of Albany, up to a maximum FAR of 3.0 for parcels on San Pablo Avenue and 2.0 for parcels on Solano Avenue.

Policy LU-3.2: San Pablo Avenue

Continue to foster the transformation of San Pablo Avenue from an auto-oriented commercial strip to a pedestrian- and transit-oriented retail boulevard. San Pablo Avenue should be a source of community pride, with distinctive buildings, an attractive streetscape, and a diverse mix of uses.

Policy LU-3.3: Solano Avenue

Enhance the pattern of tightly clustered retail storefronts, active ground floor uses, and specialty shopping, dining, and personal services along the Solano Avenue corridor. Any future infill development on Solano Avenue should maintain and enhance this pattern.

Policy LU-3.4: Solano/San Pablo

Enhance the intersection of Solano and San Pablo Avenues as the “center” of Albany and a major activity node. Land use regulations and design guidelines should reinforce the identity of this area as a hub of pedestrian traffic, distinctive architecture, and active ground floor uses.

Policy LU-3.8: Buffering

Require buffering of residential uses, particularly along Kains Avenue, Adams Street, and the perpendicular side streets that intersect Solano Avenue, from the potentially adverse impacts created by nearby commercial activities. This should include special setback and daylight plane regulations to be applied where commercial zones abut lower density zones. It may also include special use, design, and noise standards.

Policy LU-3.12: Lot Consolidation

Support the consolidation of underutilized parcels on the Solano and San Pablo corridors to create sites that are more viable for future mixed use development, including on-site parking. Development on larger sites should be designed to respect the fine-grained character of nearby properties, and should be articulated into multiple smaller storefronts rather than long, unbroken facades.

Policy LU-3.15: Northern Gateway

Ensure that any future development on the Albany Bowl site, and surrounding sites along San Pablo Avenue north of Clay Street, reflects the importance of this area and its function as a northern gateway to the City.

Action LU-3.B: Major Activity Nodes

Develop land use and design regulations that reinforce key areas along San Pablo and Solano Avenues as major activity nodes, particularly around the intersection of these two streets.

Subsequent planning studies should identify the desired character, activities, and development standards at the San Pablo-Solano node, the Northern Gateway node, and other nodes that may be identified in the future. The purpose of a node is to intensify pedestrian-oriented retail, commercial and mixed use activities at key locations. The City will work with property owners and neighbors in these areas to explore incentives, facilitate lot consolidation, and create more viable development opportunities.

Action LU-3.D: San Pablo Avenue Design Guidelines

Update the San Pablo Avenue Design Guidelines. In addition to providing direction on building scale, commercial facades, landscaping, and public improvements, the guidelines should consider the segmentation of the corridor into “districts” which are different in their function and character. If such districts are identified, zoning code amendments should be considered to reinforce the desired character.

Appendix E.

Financing Strategies

This section explores financing options that may be initiated by the City, or the developer or property owner to facilitate affordable housing, capital improvements and/or maintenance.

Public Financing and Example Grant Programs

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN

The five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) provides a road map for upcoming capital improvements in the City and helps define upcoming project funding needs. While the CIP includes the upcoming five fiscal years, the most specific part of the plan is focused on the first two years. The CIP is a planning tool for the Albany City Council to set goals, make policy choices, and award budget to actionable projects.

MTC PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT AREA FUNDING

ABAG/MTC issues “calls for projects” for State and federal funding opportunities. As a Priority Development Area (PDA), the Planning Area is well-positioned as an applicant for grants. Grants may range from priority transportation projects to housing programs. Recently, MTC has issued grant allocations for planning projects initiated under the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) program. Additionally, the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is a recurring program that funds capital projects including bicycle facilities.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM (AHSC)

AHSC is a State-initiated climate investment program that integrates housing development with transportation improvements to facilitate walking, biking and transit use, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. AHSC provides funding for affordable housing developments (new construction or renovation) and transportation infrastructure together.

Applications may be filed by the City, affordable housing developers, or jointly. For example, in the 5th round of funding in 2020, the City of Berkeley and two non-profit housing developers together received \$42 million to build 150 below-market rate housing units and construct a range of transportation improvements including sidewalks, pedestrian signals, intersection improvements, bus stop improvements, and bike facilities. The AHSC is administered by the Strategic Growth Council and implemented by the California Department of Housing and Community Development. It is funded by Cap and Trade revenues and is therefore expected to be an ongoing source of funds.

CITY IMPACT FEES

Development impact fees are one-time charges imposed as a condition of development approval to pay for capital facilities and infrastructure needed to serve new development. In 2022, the City was in the process of updating its Capital Facilities fee to establish the nexus between a new per square foot fee and the impact of new development. As of January 2022, the following impact fees were being assessed:

- Capital Facilities fee (i.e., civic buildings, police, fire, corporation yard, parks)
- Sewer connection fee
- Storm drain impact fee
- Art in Public Places fee
- School impact fee

Developers of all future projects within the Specific Plan area will be required to pay these impact fees at the time building permits are issued. These fees support facilities and services provided by the City to meet demands of existing and new development. Fees collected by the city may also be utilized to offset design, financing, and construction costs of improvements within the planning area. Developers should check the master fee schedule for the latest fees and rates.

AREA DEVELOPMENT IMPACT FEES

Area development impact fees may be enacted by the City through adoption of an ordinance. Such fees do not require a public vote to be enacted, but they do require public hearings. Area development impact fees must be directly related to the benefits received. They do not create a lien against property, but must be paid in full as a condition of approval. The principal use of these fees is for encumbering properties that would not otherwise enter into an assessment district or Mello-Roos Community Facilities District. Fees are established so that these properties pay their fair share at the time they are ready to be developed. Area development impact fees might be used, for example, in situations in which the number of owners of small developable parcels was so large that property owners would have difficulty organizing an assessment district or a community facilities district.

Proceeds may be used to reimburse property owners who pay up-front costs for facilities benefiting other properties. Benefiting properties may be given the option to finance the fees by entering into an assessment district or Mello-Roos Community Facilities District.

DEDICATIONS AND EXACTIONS

Under the Subdivision Map Act, developers may be required to dedicate land or make cash payments for public facilities required or affected by their project (e.g., road right-of-way fronting individual properties). Dedications are typically made for road and utility rights-of-way, park sites, and land for other public facilities. Cash contributions are made for other public facilities that are directly required by their projects (e.g., payments for a traffic signal).

Property Owner Financing

SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICTS

State law provides procedures to levy assessments against benefiting properties and issue tax-exempt bonds to finance public facilities and infrastructure improvements. The City Council may initiate assessment districts, also known as improvement districts, subject to approval by the property owners in the district. Assessments are distributed in proportion to the benefits received by each property as determined by engineering analysis, and form a lien against property. Special assessments are fixed dollar amounts and may be prepaid, although they are typically paid back with interest over time by the assessed property owner.

PROPERTY BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

With this tool, businesses located within a defined business improvement district are required to pay an additional tax in order to fund projects, improvements, or programming within the district's boundaries. Common improvements funded by business improvement districts are capital improvements, streetscape enhancements, ongoing maintenance, and other beautification and improvement projects.



San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan