# San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan: Overview, Issues and Options

May 27, 2020 City of Albany Planning & Zoning Commission

Lexington Planning and Urban Field Studio



#### Agenda

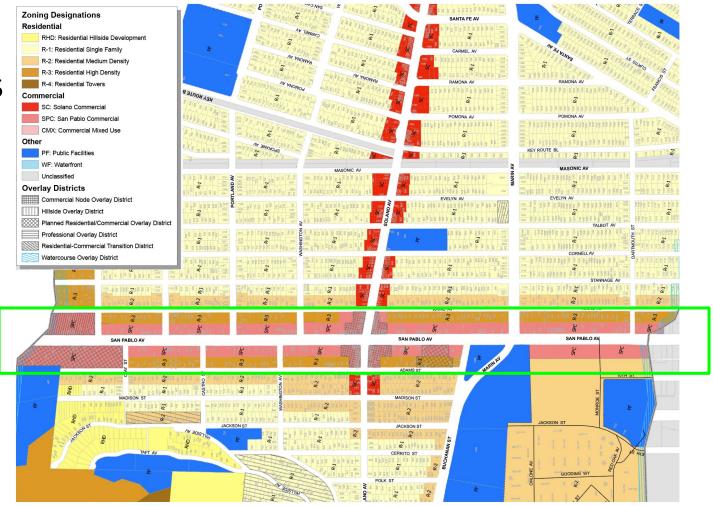
- 1. Project Overview
- 2. Economic Snapshot
  - Virtual Site Tour
- 3. Key Issues
- 4. Options
- 5. Interactive Polling
- 6. Discussion





# **Project Overview**

#### Plan Boundaries



#### **Plan Components**



#### **Housing-Focused Specific Plan**

Housing production targets:

- Regional housing needs assessment
- Guidance for applicants, City staff, and decision-makers

Need for objective design standards:

- Role of development standards in light of State Density Bonus Law waivers
- Role for design standards to meet the City's design values
- Replace existing San Pablo
  Avenue Design Guidelines

#### **Housing Element**

2014-2022: Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) = 335 units

- Anticipated 175 units at UC Village (completed as Belmont Village senior housing)
- Additional 181 units across 12 sites identified as opportunity sites on San Pablo Ave.

Next RHNA targets anticipated by July 2020; could be 3x higher



2015-2023 Housing Element

ADOPTED FEB 2, 2015

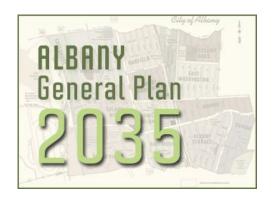
#### What does it build on?

- Urban Design Concept Plan (1989)
- Design Guidelines (1993)
- San Pablo Avenue Vision Plan (1998)
- Streetscape Plan (2001)
- Complete Streets Plan (2013)
- General Plan (2016)
- San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project (ACTC, underway)





#### Vision



"...a transformation of this corridor from auto-oriented commercial uses to more attractive, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development."

- Albany General Plan

#### **Project Focus**

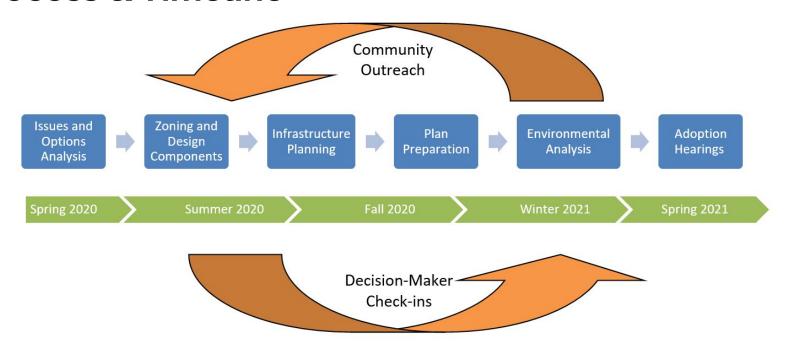
This vision imagines higher density housing and additional neighborhood and regional retail

Zoning standards have not yet been updated to facilitate this vision

As a result, the corridor has not changed substantially over the last five years (except at UC Village—a project which preceded the General Plan update)

Next era needs to anticipate the influence of State law, including the Housing Element Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)

#### **Process & Timeline**



#### **Outreach**

- Virtual Tour
- Online Forum & Surveys
- Joint Study Sessions
- Website



2.) 3300 Broadway 45 Residential Units (4 affordable units) 2,891 sf Retail California Capital Investment Group Status: Building Permit Filed



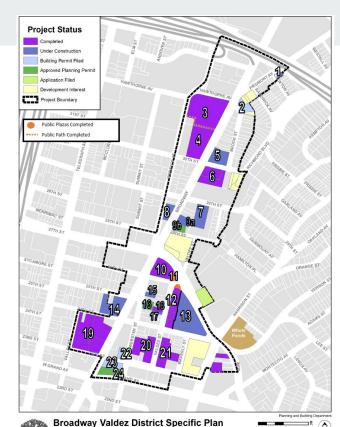
4.) 3001 Broadway 39,000 sf Retail Portfolio Dev. Status: Completed

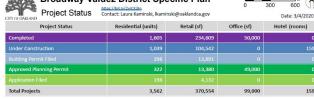


3.) 3073 Broadway 432 Residential Units 22,000 sf Retail CityView Status: Completed



5.) 3000 Broadway 127 Residential Units 8,000 sf Retail Lowe Enterprises Status: Under Construction

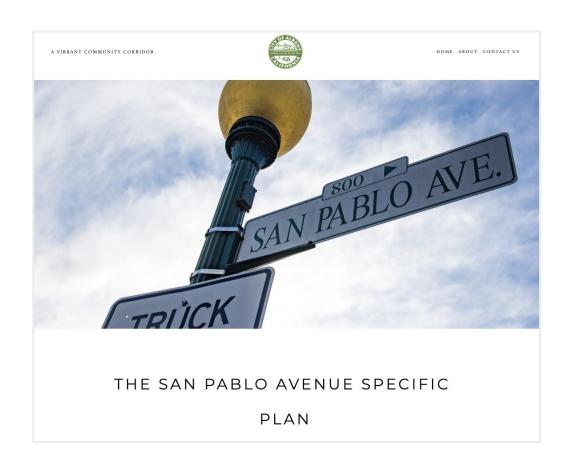




#### Website

#### SanPabloSpecificPlan.org

- Project Description
- Documents
- Feedback
- Future opportunities to get involved (online)



# Local and Regional Housing Economics

#### What is going on with housing in the East Bay?

Multi-family housing on corridors

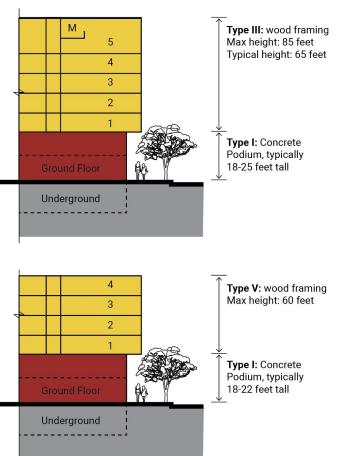
- Generally 4-6 stories tall
- Sometimes has ground floor retail
- Serves both pedestrian and auto access



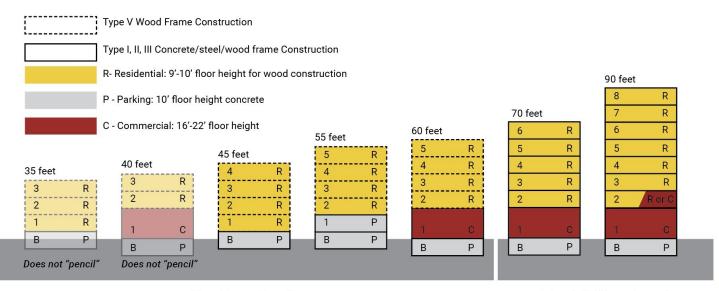
Higby - San Pablo and Ashby, Berkeley, CA

#### **Construction Types**





#### **Construction Types**



Type V over Type I

Type I, II, III over Type I

### Virtual Site Tour: Oakland

#### Maya - 4045 Broadway, Oakland

• Lot depth: 100 feet

• Lot width: 125 feet

 Frontage: on both 41st and Broadway at corner

• Stories: 5 stories, 60 feet tall,

 Ground Floor is Brenda's Restaurant

Units: 47 units, 400-800 sf Studios to 2BR

• 39,000 gsf

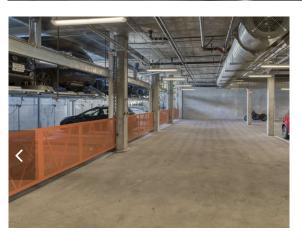
Density: 163 du/ac

 Construction type: Wood frame over concrete podium

• Status: Completed in 2019

• Parking: mechanical lifts



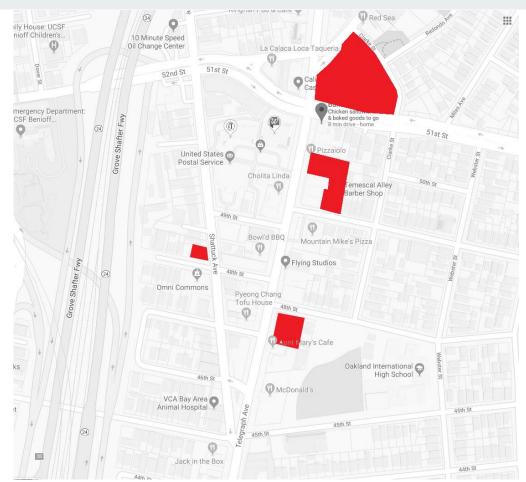




#### Temescal, Oakland

- Residential and mixed-use projects (generally 5-6 stories)
- Some modular construction

















#### 4700 Telegraph

• Lot depth: 130 feet

• Lot width: 150 feet

 Frontage: Telegraph Avenue and 48th Street

• Stories: 5 stories, 57 feet tall,

 Ground Floor is Mobile Phone Sales and other.

• Units: 48 units

• 65,000 gsf

• Density: 107 du/ac

Construction type: modular IIA

Status: Completed in 2019

Parking: 46 parking stalls



#### 4801 Shattuck

• Address: 4801 Shattuck

Oakland

• Lot depth: 60 feet

• Lot width: 135 feet

• Frontage: 48th Street

• Stories: 5 stories, 57 feet tall

Ground Floor is Dog Grooming

• Units: 43 units

• 47,300 gsf

• Density: 231du/ac

Construction type: modular IIA

• Status: Completed in 2018

Parking: 45 parking stalls





# Temescal Place - 4811 Telegraph

• Lot depth: 50 feet

• Lot width: 200 feet

• Frontage: 48th Street

• Stories: 6 stories, 70 feet tall,

Ground Floor is Salon

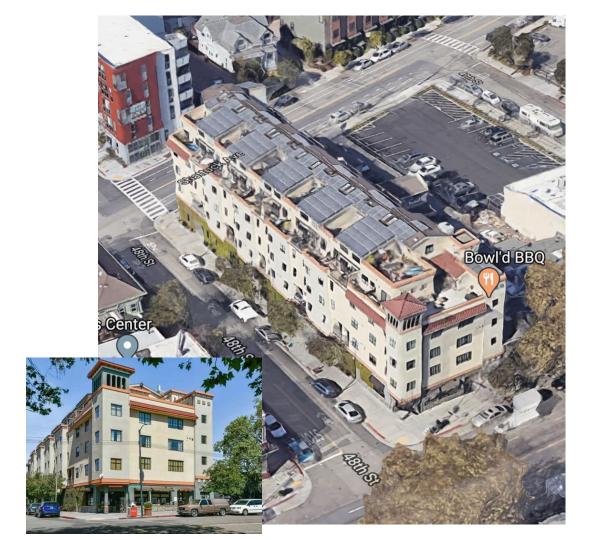
• Units: 26 units (some condos)

Density: 113du/ac

Construction type: V/I

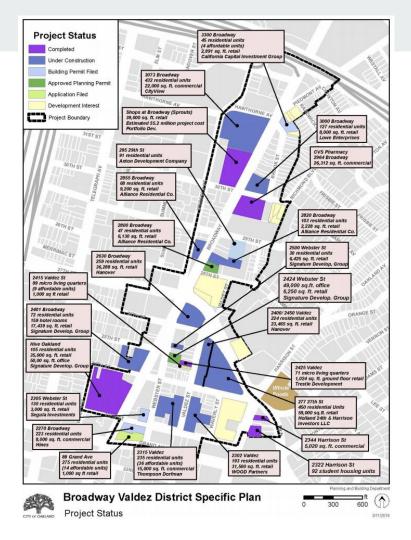
• Status: Completed in 2004

Parking: (most likely over 30 stalls)



#### **Broadway/Valdez**

Good examples for standards and guidelines for multi-family housing typologies











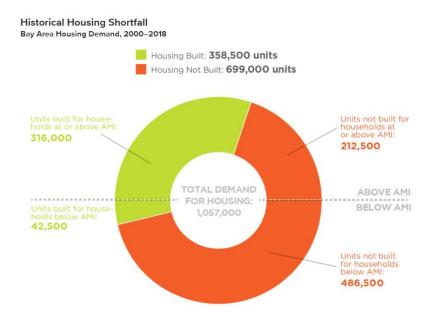




# Demographics & COVID-19

#### **Regional Housing Demand**

- Housing development has not kept up with job growth
- Lack of housing supply
- Lack of housing affordability



Source: What It Will Really Take to Create an Affordable Bay Area (SPUR).

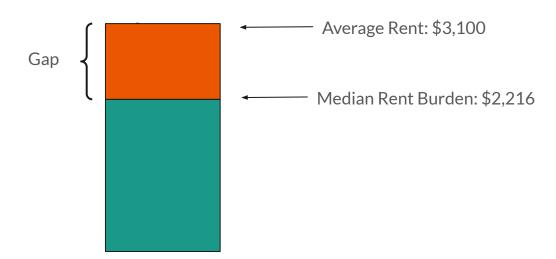
#### Income

Albany Median Income: \$88,665

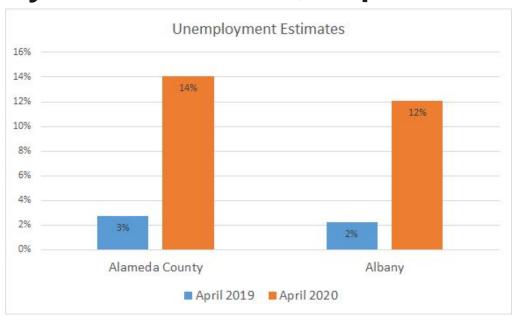


Source: American Community Survey 2018 5-Year Estimates (Albany, CA)

#### **Housing Affordability in Albany**



#### **Unemployment (COVID-19 Impacts)**

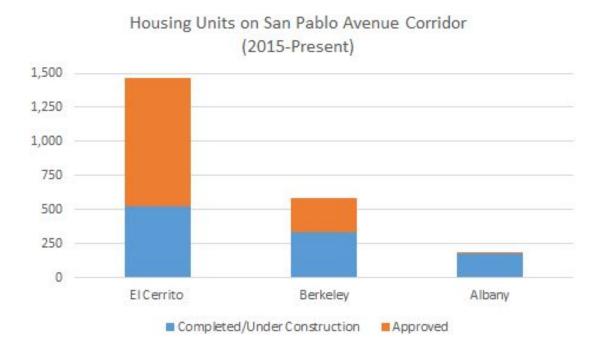


Source: California Employment Development Department, April 2019 & April 2020

# **Key Issues**

### Minimal Development Activity

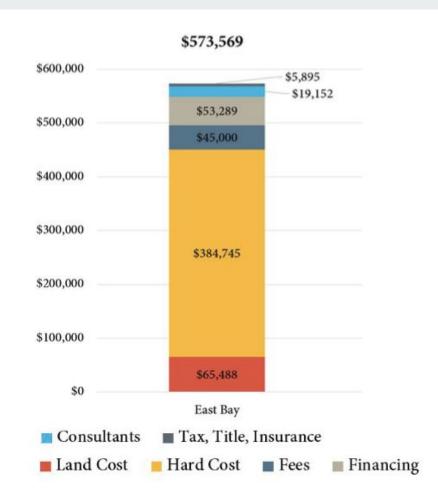
#### **Development in Albany and Surrounding Cities**



# Market Factors – Costs vs. Revenues

The average cost of a unit in the East Bay is \$573,569, based on a prototypical 120-unit project with a mix of studios, one- and two-bedroom units

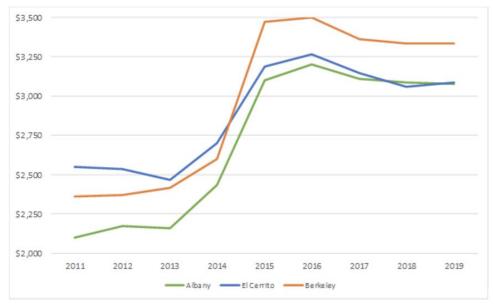
Source: "Making It Pencil: The Math Behind Housing Development" Terner Center for Housing Innovation, UC Berkeley. August 2019.



#### **Market Factors - Rents**

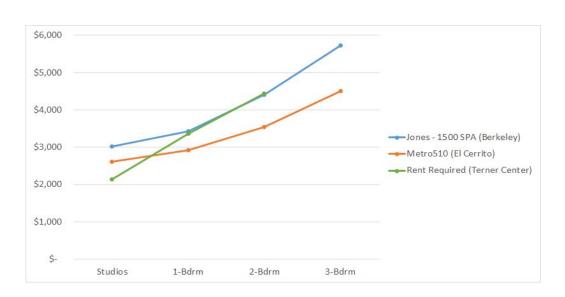
- Terner Center estimates rents required to build projects:
  - o \$2,138 studios
  - \$3,366 1-bedrooms
  - o \$4,441 2 bedrooms
- Rents in Albany generally averaged about \$3,100 in 2019, according to Zillow.

Figure 3: Rent Prices in Albany and Surrounding Communities (2011-2019)



Source: Zillow Rent Estimates (single-family and multifamily, monthly estimates averaged).

### **Potential Rents (New Construction)**







## Feasible Project Scale

- Cost of constructing underground parking and ground-floor commercial space needs to be subsidized by the housing above
- A project that is 3 stories tall is not feasible at this time, which is one of the reasons why there is such minimal housing production on San Pablo
- More likely that the market supports multifamily projects that are 4-8 stories tall



## One-Size-Fits-All Approach to Retail Creates Fractured Development Pattern

## One-Size-Fits-All Approach to Retail

- Ground-floor commercial development is required for the entire corridor
- No clustering of retail or sense of hierarchy
- Fractured development pattern



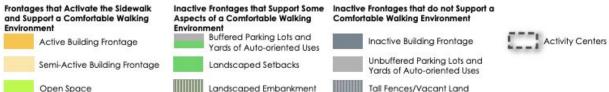


### **Commercial Market Summary**

- Low vacancy rates @ 3.3% for office and retail
- Rents @ \$2.80/sq. ft. for retail; \$2.83/sq. ft. for office; similar to the East Bay (Co-Star, Dec. 2019, Albany/Kensington subarea)
- Lower rents on San Pablo Ave. (\$1.85-\$2.75/sq. ft.) compared to Solano Ave. \$2.53-\$3.45/sq. ft.)

Sources: Co-Star, Dec. 2019, Albany/Kensington subarea; Loopnet and MRE Commercial





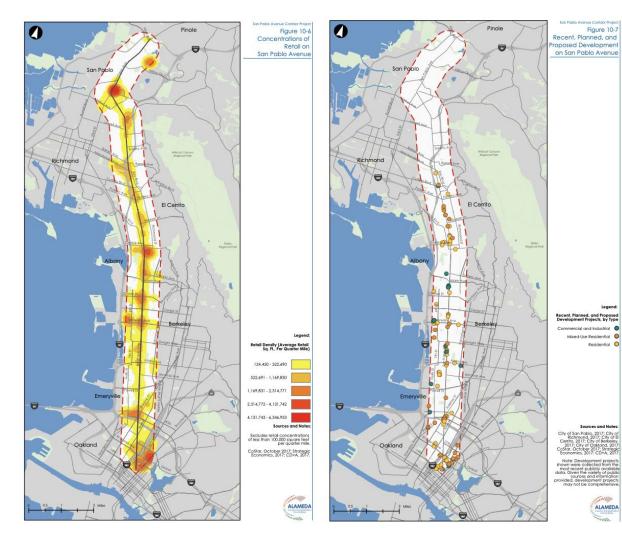




Figure 10-7

Residential O

Sources and Notes:

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ALAMEDA

## Development Standards not Aligned with Adopted Goals and Policies

### Standards not Aligned with Adopted Goals

"a transformation of this corridor from auto-oriented commercial uses to more attractive, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development."

However, the implementing zoning standards have not yet been updated to facilitate this vision

### **Zoning District Purposes**

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.

\*2018 Updated SPC district purpose to match General Plan



## **Zoning District Standards**

Characteristic	SPC Standard	R-3 Standard
Residential density (units/acre)	20 (min) to 63 (max)	63 (max)
Maximum FAR	Mixed Use: 2.25 (max res. FAR = 1.3)* Commercial only: 0.95 Residential only: not permitted	Multi-family dwelling: 1.5 - 1.75
Maximum Lot Coverage	100%	Multi-family dwelling: 70%
Maximum Height	38, 20/12 where abutting an R zone	35/28

<sup>\*</sup>General Plan identifies a potential 3.0 FAR bonus, but this has not been codified in the zoning ordinance

## City of Berkeley Zoning: West Berkeley Commercial (C-W)

- Similar parcel configuration with 100-foot deep parcels fronting San Pablo, abutting residential zoning
- FAR of 3.0
- Height of 40 or 50 feet (for mixed use projects)
- No residential density standard



1835 San Pablo Ave. (at Hearst), Berkeley: 99 units (including 7 very-low income) and ground-floor live/work, approved December 2019. Exceeds height limit from 50 to 64 feet (4 to 6 stories) using State Density Bonus Law waivers. Density is 222 du/acre. (Trachtenberg Architects)

### City of El Cerrito's - San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

- No residential density or FAR limit
- Specific Plan regulates general massing and sidewalk widths through street typologies
- Height limit of 55 to 65 feet (or greater with affordable housing)
- Parcels follow the 100-foot depth pattern, but the city also has larger parcels, with 150-200 foot depths



10963 San Pablo Avenue (at Jefferson), El Cerrito: 32 units and 3,000 sq. ft. of retail in the medium density zoning district. Density is 119 du/acre.

### **State Density Bonus Law**

- Gives developers the right to build additional dwelling units in exchange for building affordable or senior housing
- Projects can receive up to 35% bonuses depending on the level of affordability provided
- Project can receive waivers to modify development standards and reduce parking requirements

### **Albany's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance**

- >5 dwelling units provide 15% of units below market rate.
- <10 units must provide one low-income unit</li>
- 10+ units most provide half of the required units to low-income households and half to very low income households

Therefore, most projects in the City qualify as State Density Bonus projects and are eligible for waivers and concessions from development standards

## Project Examples in the SPC Zone

## **Typical Lots**

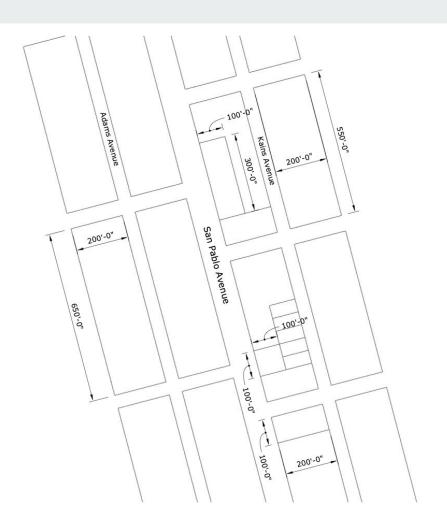
Blocks along San Pablo are very long:

- 550 feet in length on the east side
- 650-700 feet long on the west side

Access points mid-block are important to facilitate circulation

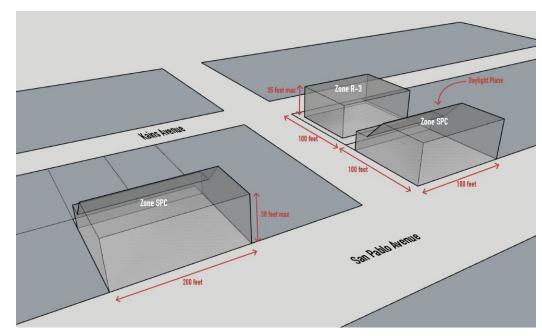
100-foot lot depths

SPC + R-3 abutting conditions



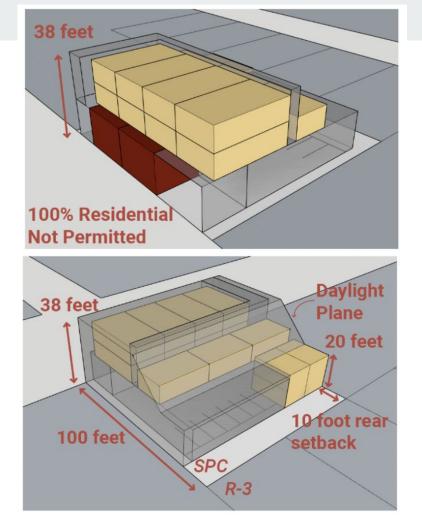
## **Visualizing Zoning**

	SPC	R-3
Residential Density (units/acre)	20 min 63 max	63 max
Max FAR	0.95 Commercial + 1.3 residential = 2.25	1.5-1.75
Max Lot Coverage	100%	70%
Max Height	38 feet, except 20/12 using a daylight plane	38 feet, except 28 using a daylight plane



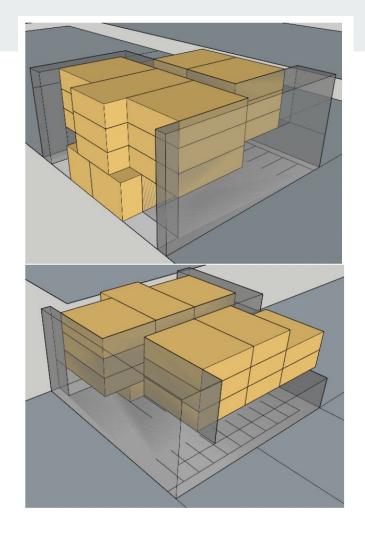
### **Base SPC Zoning Project**

- 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.



### **Density Bonus Project**

- 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



### **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:

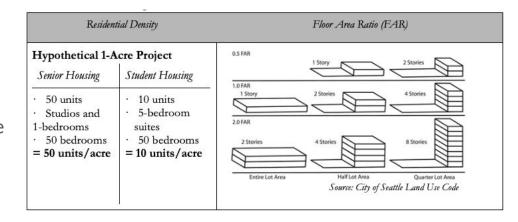
- waivers to reduce the rear setback, increase height, exceed the residential FAR, and reduce daylight plane
- concession to eliminate the ground-floor commercial requirement and instead locate residential units on the San Pablo Avenue frontage.

# **Key Zoning Standards that Affect Site Development**

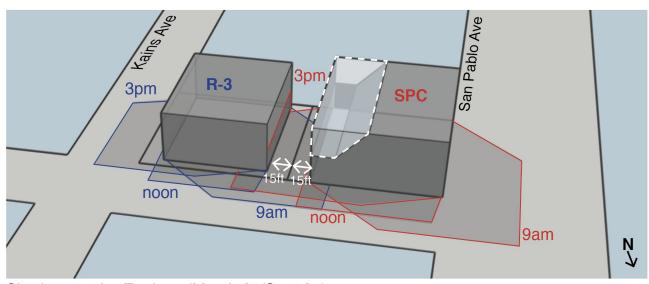
### **Key Standards - Residential Density**

Residential density is a key standard that limits potential density

Residential density values vary based on the number of units and do not reflect the unit size or number of bedrooms in each unit



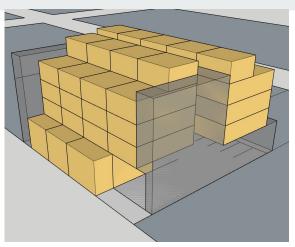
## Key Standards - Building Height and Daylight Plane

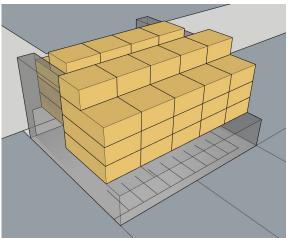


Shadows at the Equinox (March 21/Sept 21)

## SPC Alternative - Maximum Zoning Test

- Total Units: 30 (double existing)
- Using mechanical lifts for all spaces
- Assuming 0.8 spaces/unit
- Assuming the maximum for Type V wood frame construction at 4 stories with mezzanines (partial 5th story)
- Unit size: 750-1,000sf per unit
- Density: 131 du/acre





## **Key Standards - Residential Parking**

In 2016, Albany citizens voted to restore parking standards as City Council policy.

In 2017, MFR parking requirements were modified to 1 space/unit

Parking is a major driver for building massing and a strong limitation to the amount of housing possible at a given site.

Underground parking can be prohibitively expensive in this market

### **Key Standards - Open Space**

Two types: private and shared

Large range of standards that apply to open space in multi-family residential depending on a community's values:

Berkeley: 40 sf/unit

• El Cerrito: 80 sf/unit

• Albany: 200 sf common/unit or 100 sf

private/unit



Table 1-1: Albany's Share of the Regional Housing Needs Allocation 2014-2022

Income Category <sup>2</sup>	NEW CONSTRUCTION NEED	
Very Low (0-50% of AMI*)	80	
Low (51-80% of AMI)	53	
Moderate (81-120% of AMI)	57	
Above Moderate (over 120% of AMI)	145	
TOTAL UNITS	335	

Source: Association of Bay Area Governments, 2014

\*AMI=Area Median Income

**Effects of State Law** 

SDBL waivers and concessions have become a work-around to generate new housing supply and deviate from local land use controls

It is more prudent to match and regulate the building typologies that are marketable today with updated zoning and design guidelines that reflect the City's desires and directly address typical multi-family development

At the same time, this project needs to address the impacts of current State laws, recognize the role of objective standards and the influence of SDBL waivers, and anticipate the City's regional housing needs allocation requirements for the next Housing Element cycle

Although standards can be modified, the City has more control over enforcing design standards

## Underutilized Properties Create a Disjointed Development Pattern

Underutilized Properties Create a Disjointed Development Pattern

The pattern of development along San Pablo Avenue is primarily auto-oriented and low density

There is a limited sense that you are in Albany vs. El Cerrito or Berkeley.



## **Frontage Typologies**

The building frontages and access points off of San Pablo Avenue are confusing to the observer

#### Two patterns at play:

- a tolerable (but not great) pedestrian-oriented pattern with storefronts that meet the edge of the street
- auto-oriented pattern that circulates at a larger scale





## Lot Sizes, Parking & Circulation

100-foot parcel depth allows for:

- 40-foot deep use (a limited depth for retail)
- 60-foot wide row of parking and another

San Pablo has long blocks, between 550 and 650 feet. If you miss a turn or cannot find parking, it is difficult to change directions.



## Lot Sizes, Parking & Circulation

Where there is a raised center median, circulation requires a right-in, right-out configuration. As a result, if there are no spaces available, you have to re-circulate around the block, or leave for the next business district.

Future development should consider the need to return to an address after you have missed it and consider paseos and other pass-throughs for pedestrians.





## Effects of Commercial Parking Configuration

Parking on small lots is challenging for businesses and affects pedestrian safety, commercial viability, and the overall urban design pattern

Small parking lots often each with their own access points, resulting in an inefficient configuration of land

Customers might assume that the parking nearby is available to them; however, signs indicate otherwise

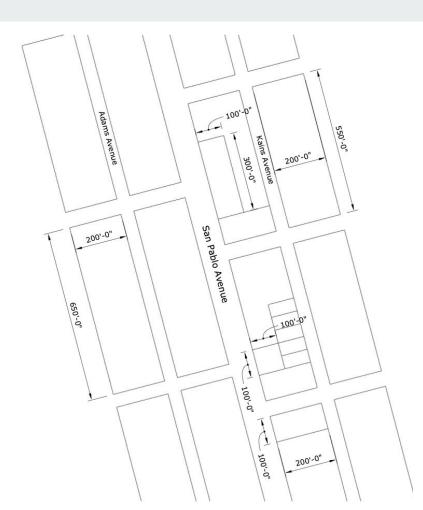




## Limitations of Parcel Size on Redevelopment

Development of higher density housing is at a larger scale than the standard lot size along San Pablo Avenue

A typical 50 x 100 foot (or 5,000-square foot parcel) is too small to achieve economies of a scale



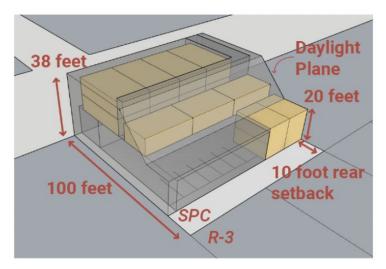
## Limitations of Parcel Size & Opportunity for Lot Consolidation



A project becomes more feasible where two or more lots are in common ownership and where parcels extend through to Kains Avenue or Adams Street

However, if the parcel extends from San Pablo to a parallel street, it typically straddles the SPC and R-3 zoning which means projects must contend with two sets of regulations, including a height reduction/daylight plane

The depth of the parcel limits the layout of parking and units. The larger the site, either in width or depth, the more physically feasible the project.



#### Sense of Place

When have you arrived in Albany on San Pablo Avenue?

Is there a difference between Albany, El Cerrito or Berkeley?

A sense of place is reinforced by a consistent street wall, variation, landmarks, signage, art







### **Options for Implementation**

## Options for Increasing Housing Development Activity on San Pablo Avenue:

- 1. Adjust development standards to implement the General Plan vision and match what the market can feasibly construct.
- 2. Streamline the approval process (e.g., should SDBL projects require City Council approval?)
- 3. Utilize the CEQA review anticipated for this planning process to streamline environmental review
- 4. Set fees, infrastructure requirements, and community benefits based on financial feasibility as part of plan adoption or a citywide process
- 5. Local density bonus program





# Options for Better Alignment Between General Plan/Housing Market and the Zoning Code

- 1. Revise zoning standards:
  - a. Consider increasing building height and eliminating daylight plane to allow for feasible development projects
  - b. Consider increasing residential density to reduce the incentive toward larger (more expensive) units
  - c. Consider changes to FAR limits to outline the desired building envelope and allow for the higher density development envisioned in the General Plan
  - d. Allow the podium garage to extend into the rear setback to make the ground-floor circulation more efficient and provide opportunities for open space on the 2nd floor
- 2. Revise San Pablo Avenue Design Guidelines to regulate design based on objective standards and express the community's ideals for design.



## Options for Making Retail More Viable and Vibrant

- 1. Create nodes of intensity along San Pablo Avenue
- 2. Require commercial development at the ground floor at nodes, but allow 100% multifamily in other portions of the SPC district.
- 3. Consider designating retail-only parcels in key locations
- 4. Incentivize commercial retail at the ground floor at commercial nodes by allowing more housing





### **Parking Management Options:**

- 1. Parking lifts for residential parking
- 2. Reductions near transit
- 3. Parking spaces should be allowed to convert to housing or shared amenity space in the future if they are no longer needed
- 4. Unbundling (currently allowed, could be required)
- 5. Require adequate loading spaces for Lyft/Uber and delivery services.
- 6. Parking paid in-lieu to fund shared public parking
- 7. Shared parking agreements (private)



### **Open Space Options:**

- Consider what types of open space are most useful for residents living on the corridor
- 2. Reduce the open space requirement and the minimum dimension from for shared open spaces (currently 50 feet minimum in any direction) to provide more flexibility in site planning
- 3. Require shared amenities and/or offer incentives to include them
- 4. Require enough planting medium for landscaping to grow on podiums
- 5. Require direct access to daylight for hallways and common rooms to ensure livability







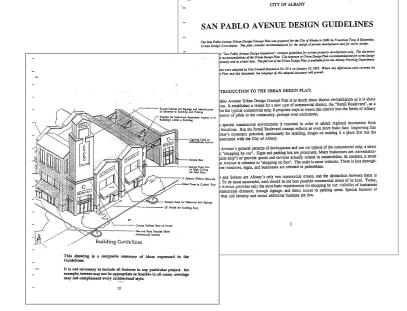
# Options to Improve the Interface between Private Property and the Public ROW:

- 1. Define the sidewalk and landscape frontage on streets:
  - a. Require building frontages to address the street edge
  - b. Require parking to be placed behind the frontages wherever feasible.
- Consider how buildings support the streetscape on San Pablo Avenue and coordinate with the other regional projects that may modify the street and streetscape



## Options to Improve the Interface between Private Property and the Public ROW:

- 1. Revise the San Pablo Design Guidelines:
  - a. Provide design standards and guidelines for the facade of buildings
  - b. Provide objective design standards for breaking up the massing, entrances, and ground floor design.
  - Make these design standards flexible enough to allow for differentiated expression, and focus on the functional aspects of design



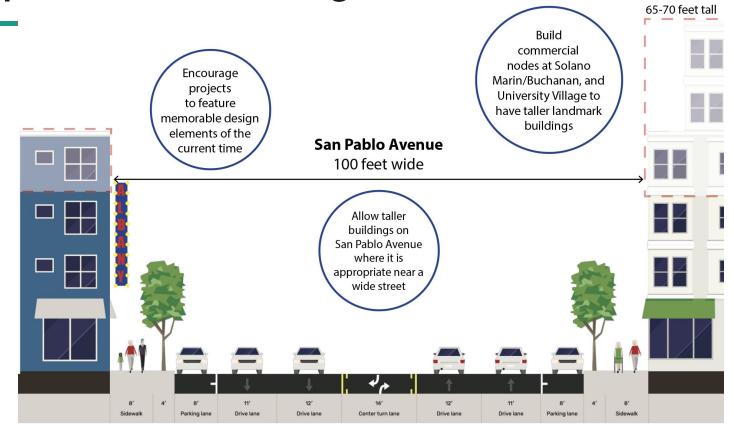
### **Options for Consolidating Sites**

Provide an incentive to consolidate parcels by allowing the higher zoning (i.e., SPC) to apply to contiguously owned parcels that otherwise straddle the R-3

Work with local brokers and property owners to facilitate redevelopment projects on vacant and underutilized properties Continue to implement the following Housing Element program to encourage lot consolidation that can achieve economies of scale:

Program 2H: Work with interested property owners to encourage the assembly of underutilized parcels and their consolidation into single parcels in order to create larger, more marketable potential housing sites, especially along the San Pablo Avenue corridor.

**Options for Facilitating a Sense of Place:** 



### Polling

### **Key Discussion Topics**

Adjust development standards to implement the General Plan vision for a pedestrian-oriented mixed-use corridor and match what the market can feasibly construct

Create nodes along the corridor with different intensities and use requirements, rather than treating all of San Pablo Avenue with the same standards

Revise the San Pablo Avenue Design Guidelines to regulate design based on objective standards and express the community's ideals for design

Facilitate the development of underutilized parcels by working with property owners and brokers to consolidate small lots



### **Questions & Discussion**