



San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Virtual Open House Summary

March 10, 2021
City of Albany
Planning & Zoning Commission

Lexington Planning and Urban Field Studio



San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Overview

The City of Albany is preparing a **Specific Plan for San Pablo Avenue** to support more multifamily housing and residential mixed use development on the corridor.

This effort is being funded through a grant from CA Housing & Community Development (HCD).

The project **envisions “a transformation of this corridor from auto-oriented commercial uses to more attractive, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development.”**

To implement this vision, the Specific Plan will consider **updates to the Zoning Ordinance, General Plan, and design guidelines that regulate development on the corridor.**



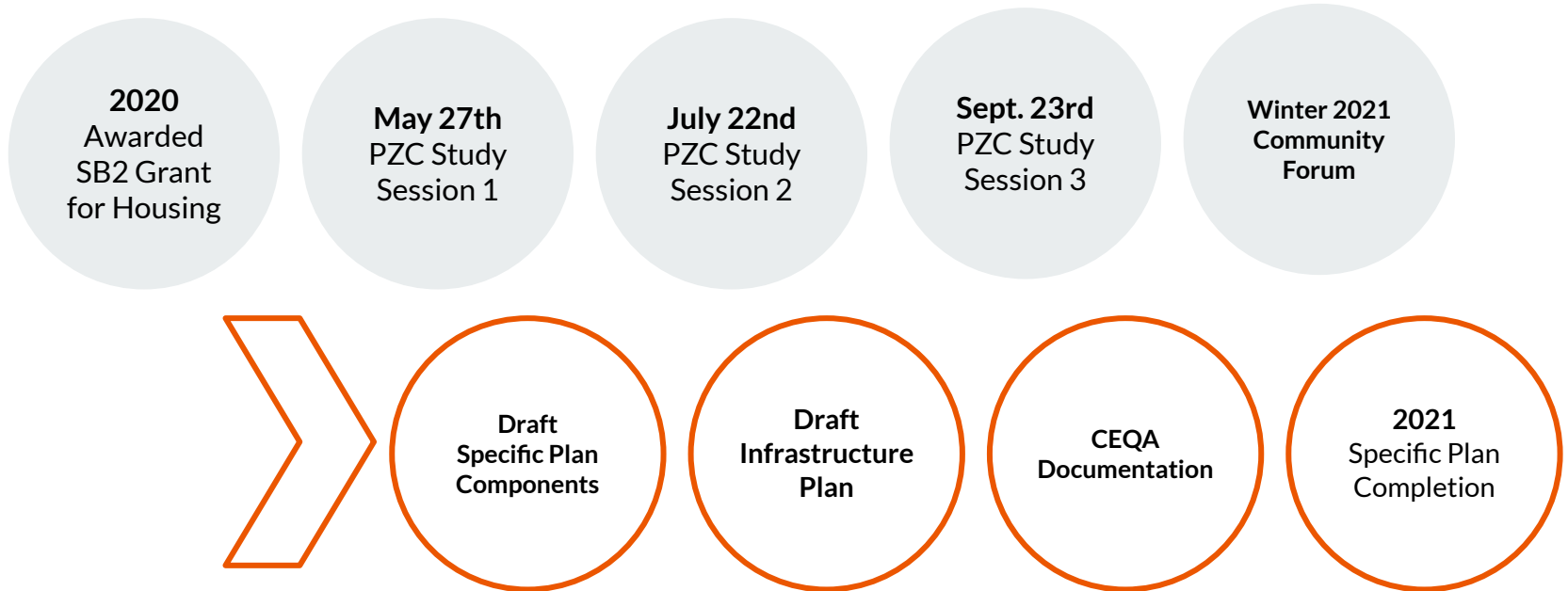
San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Overview

The **Planning & Zoning Commission** explored aspects of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan through three **work sessions** with staff and consultants in **May, July, and September 2020**. The project team synthesized feedback from these sessions into a series of policy options.

A **Virtual Open House** was held from November 20-January 31st to gather feedback on policy options considered for the Specific Plan.



Plan Timeline





Virtual Community Outreach

Outreach activities included:

- A Virtual Online Open House - *Open November 20, 2020 - January 31, 2021*

Objective:

To get feedback from what community members think about the policy options and their priorities for the planning area.



THE SAN PABLO AVENUE SPECIFIC PLAN

<https://www.sanpablospecificplan.org/>

Public Notice

- Postcards mailed to property owners
- Announcements at City Council, Planning Commission, Advisory Bodies
- Posted on Nextdoor
- eNews
- Social Media
- City Website

Contribute to the **SAN PABLO AVENUE SPECIFIC PLAN**



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

Visit sanpablospecificplan.org to learn about the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan and to view the virtual Open House, now through December 31st, 2020.

Let us know what you think. Your input will shape the policies and zoning standards in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan.

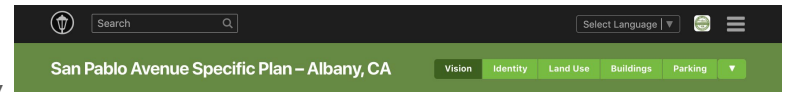


Virtual Open House on Neighborland

A Virtual Open House is a website presentation that explains key project topics. The presentation is paired with discussion forum questions and survey activities.

Statistics

- Open from November 20, 2022 to January 31, 2021
- 443 total participants
- 72 contributors
- 536 unique insights (comments, likes, survey responses)
- 4,700+ page views
- 80+ hours of engagement online (time on site)
- 61% on desktop, 39% on mobile or tablet



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



Analytics

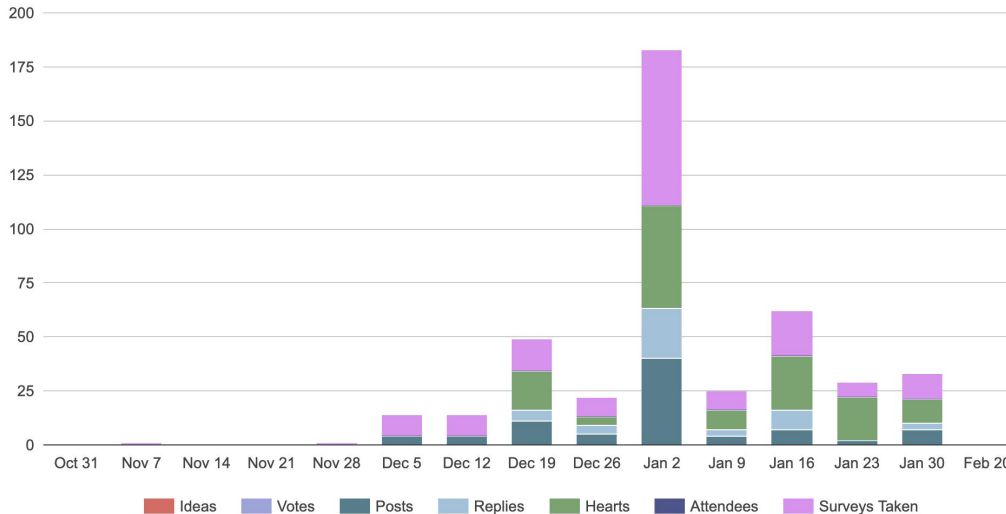
462
Participants

Total of online visitors (unique users reported by Google Analytics), anonymous contributors, and offline participants.

72
Contributors

People who actively contributed (commented, voted, shared an idea, took a survey). Includes anonymous and offline participants.

Activity



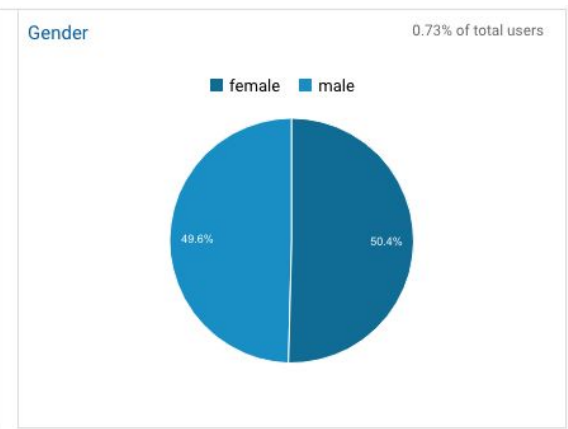
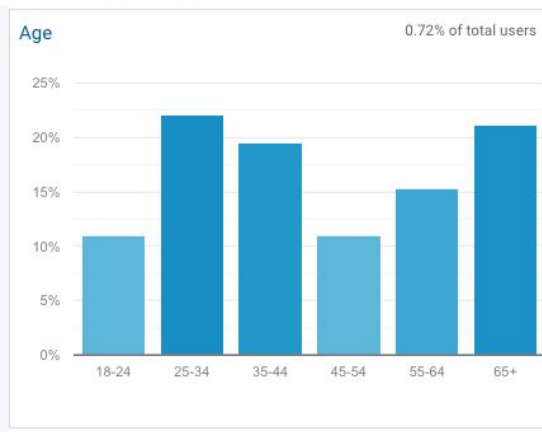
Albany CA

443
% of
Total:
2.69%
(16,495)

1.	sanpablospecificplan.org / referral	183 (36.38%)
2.	(direct) / (none)	179 (35.59%)
3.	neighborland / email	62 (12.33%)
4.	m.facebook.com / referral	25 (4.97%)
5.	nextdoor.com / referral	16 (3.18%)
6.	actionnetwork.org / referral	6 (1.19%)
7.	google / organic	6 (1.19%)
8.	api.twitter.com / referral	4 (0.80%)

Target Audiences

- San Pablo Avenue Business Owners
- Albany Residents near San Pablo Avenue
- University Village Residents
- Albany Residents at Large
- General Email List



4% visit and live outside of Albany

40% lives within 2 blocks

2% have a business located on San Pablo Avenue

50% visit and live in Albany

4% are generally interested



Many visited more than once

The average visitor participated for more than 5 minutes

Users
Albany CA
443



New Users
Albany CA
435



Sessions
Albany CA
848



Number of Sessions per User
Albany CA
1.91



Pageviews
Albany CA
4,716



Pages / Session
Albany CA
5.56



Avg. Session Duration
Albany CA
00:05:40



Bounce Rate
Albany CA
45.99%



A Sample of Comments

Keep San Pablo Avenue the way it is now:

More housing will bring crime	No high rises	It is noisy and dirty on SPA, why put housing there?
More housing will impact our schools	This is a town - keep it that way	Village by the Bay
San Pablo is a congested freeway	Side street traffic will be terrible	Tall buildings reduce natural light
More housing means more parking problems	Tall buildings block scenic views	We need to preserve the character of the community

San Pablo Avenue needs to evolve:

San Pablo Avenue could be so much better	a city must be allowed to evolve to suit the needs of those who live in it	Albany should do its part for the housing crisis
SPA is currently gap-toothed, it would be so much better with a mix of mid-rise housing.	Let's bring this in line with neighboring communities	FAR and density restrictions constrain the ability to build housing
Density makes sense for underutilized areas	Denser development will allow for a more vibrant streetscape	This is an urban area, it makes more sense than sprawl
Density makes sense near transit	higher density means more lively foot traffic	tall houses have been built next to short houses in cities all over the world

Heart of San Pablo Avenue

Comments Edit

Where is the heart of San Pablo Avenue in Albany? As you consider this question, consider how the heart (or hearts) of San Pablo Avenue might differ from the development around it. Use the Add Comment tool to drop a pin on the map. Write in a suggestion. Le...

Comments
35

Positive
6%

Neutral
69%

Negative
25%

Pages: Identity



San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan
City of Albany, California

SPA Plan Boundary
City Limits

1/4-Mile Radius
State Owned (local land use regulations do not apply)

Base Map
0 250 500 1,000 Feet



If more housing needs to go somewhere in Albany, where is it the most appropriate?

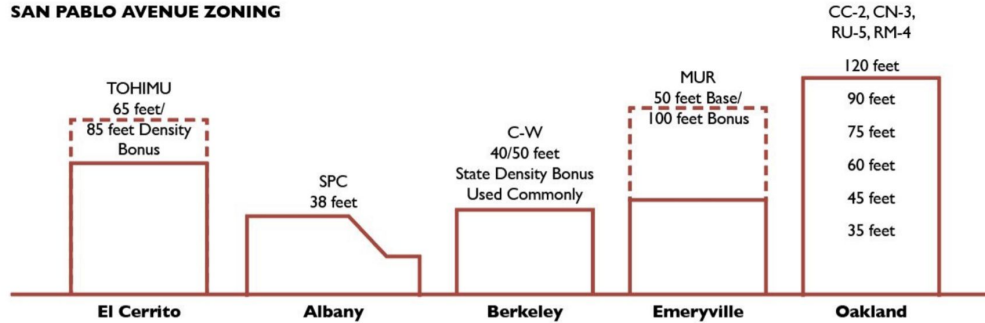
Density makes sense near transit

Density makes sense for underutilized areas

This is an urban area, it makes more sense than in lower-density areas and sprawl

Building Heights

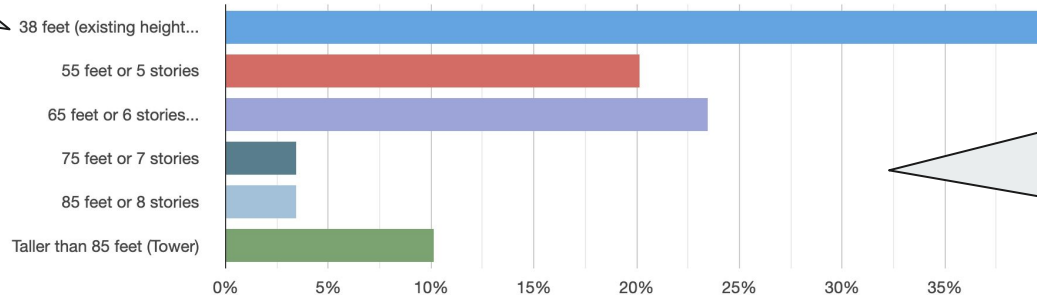
SAN PABLO AVENUE ZONING



Let's bring this in line with neighboring communities.

What is the most appropriate height limit for development fronting on San Pablo Avenue (in the SPC zone)?

40% think the existing height limits are best



60% are ok with taller buildings, most prefer 5-6 story buildings

“I suggest a strong design review board for any new projects.”



Most projects go through design review, currently. However, State Housing Laws aim to **reduce the subjective** nature of design review boards and make it easier to build.

“We really shouldn’t allow more than three stories.”



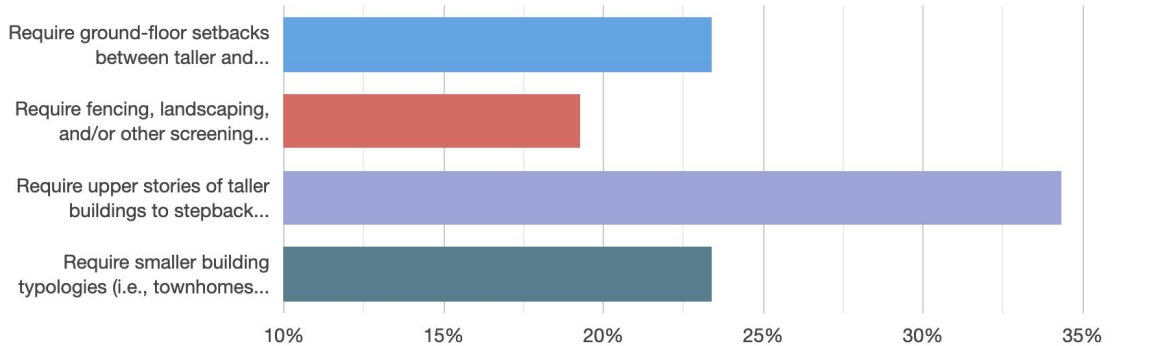
The State Density Bonus Laws allow developers to waive these rules right now.

“There should be options for taller structures when they are designed with community input”



There can be a local incentive program and a path that provides more local oversight.

How should bigger buildings on San Pablo Avenue mitigate light, air, and privacy impacts on lower density homes on Kains Avenue and Adams Street? (select all that apply)



Daylight Plane

- Shadow of the hill
- Direct/indirect sunlight is nice to have
- Daylight plane is more restrictive than height limits

Do shadows supersede the severe housing shortage?

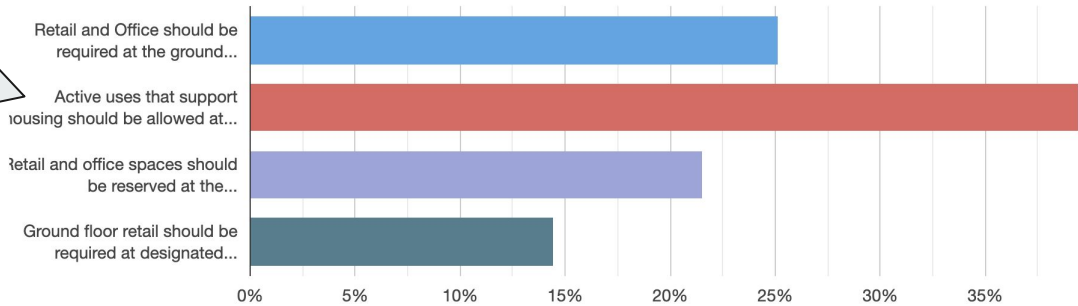
“I think there are a variety of ways that transitions can be managed and would suggest allowing flexibility for different types of creative solutions rather than being overly prescriptive.”



The intention is to write policies that provide options.

39% are ok with non-commercial at the ground floor on San Pablo Avenue

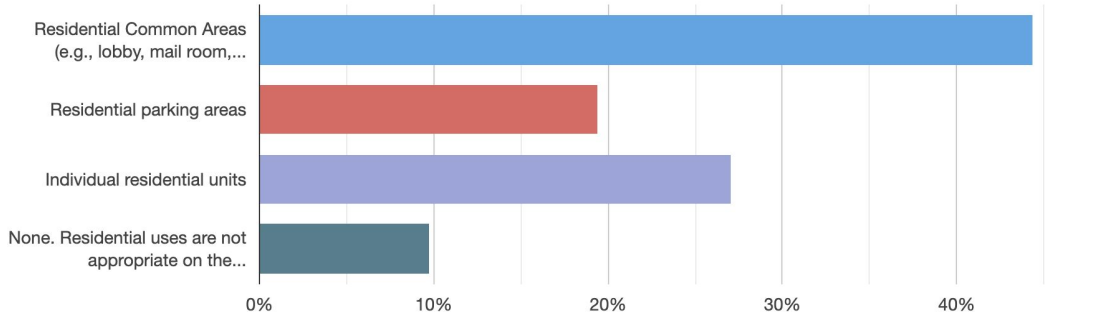
Where should ground floor commercial (retail and office) be required on San Pablo Avenue?



The majority would like to maintain the option for commercial on San Pablo Avenue

How do we know what will happen with retail post-pandemic?

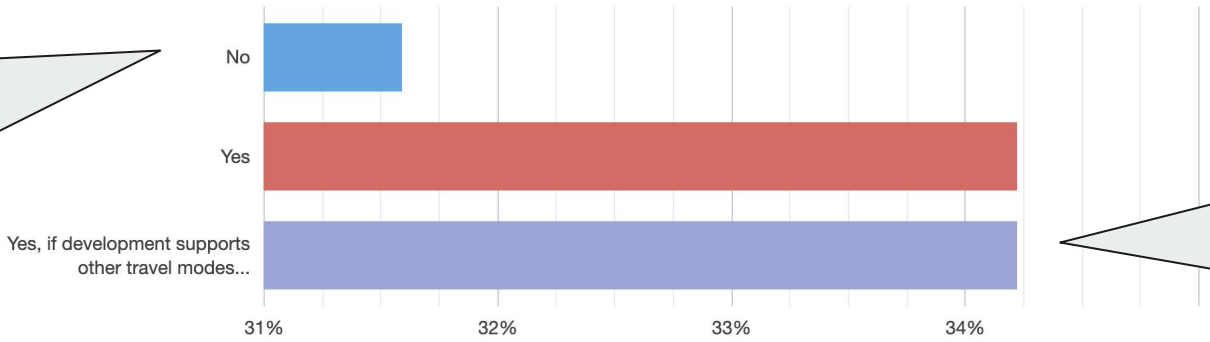
What types of residential uses would be appropriate on the ground-floor on San Pablo Ave.? (select all that apply)



Residential Common Areas and individual units were the top two appropriate residential uses for the ground floor on San Pablo Avenue

Should the City reduce the vehicle parking requirement to 0.5 spaces/dwelling unit within the Specific Plan area?

32% did not support reduced parking requirements



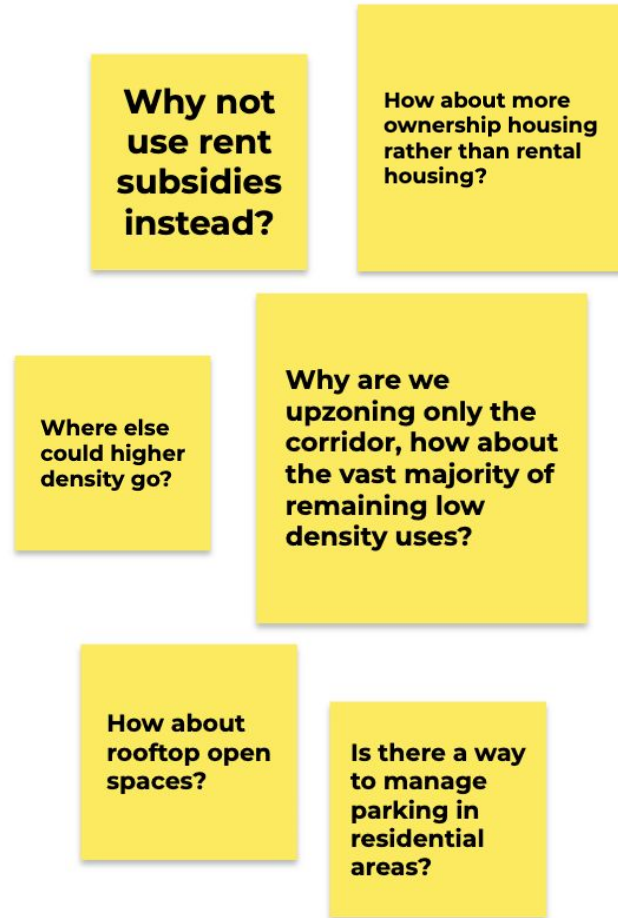
The majority (68%) are ok with reducing the vehicle parking requirement

✓
Yes to requiring spaces for long-tail bikes

✓
Yes to providing incentives for bicycle amenities

✓
Yes to providing incentives that support transit ridership

Questions to consider:



Additional elements, supported by other City plans and policies:



Policy Context

- Previous plans, guidelines, and studies that this effort builds on
- Parallel planning efforts: ACTC SPA Corridor plan, Complete Streets
- Discuss how existing standards compare between El Cerrito and Berkeley



Today's Economic Reality

- Existing context: ground-floor commercial required everywhere, densities/heights that do not support contemporary development types/local market conditions
- Housing potential on San Pablo Avenue
- Development feasibility/market conditions misaligned with existing standards (e.g., height limit, density)





The Housing Crisis and Equity

- Equity and inclusion are part of this plan
- Housing affordability crisis, likely RHNA target (1,150 units, including 60% BMR)

Lets maximize the ability for all income levels to live in Albany

5+ stories gives a chance for people with lower income to afford to live in Albany and more options for everyone

If we refuse to allow higher density housing we are continuing a pattern of economic and racial segregation and discriminatory zoning policies.



Next Steps?

Drafting the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

Infrastructure Planning (LEAP Grant Pending)

CEQA Analysis

