2/25/2026 Planning Commission Subcommittee Report on Corridors Zoning Update

The subcommittee wrestled with the particular challenge that the narrow geographic area of the proposed College Avenue corridor poses and the potential unintended consequences it could create for the Elmwood District. While there was particular concern for Elmwood among public commenters at the last Planning Commission meeting, the subcommittee felt that a clear and consistent principle should govern all corridor upzoning (for this corridor zoning update, and potentially other corridor re-zonings in Berkeley) that is based on the corridors' structural characteristics, not just the level of neighborhood engagement and comments.

To keep in the spirit of the Affirmative Furthering Fair Housing, the City Council's desire for fair regulatory practices between high and low-resource corridors, and neighborhood desires for contextual planning, the subcommittee proposes the following base height scheme. This approach provides a consistent methodological basis, based not on a district's wealth and influence, or particularities of current retail character, but on street width for determining heights of buildings, using the 0.65 ratio currently proposed for San Pablo Avenue in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan across all corridors in question.

Table 1 - Proposed stories for corridors based on San Pablo Avenue base height ratio

				Now	**Alternate One**		**Alternate Two**	
Zone	**Name**	**ROW (ft)**	**Stories**	**H:W ratio ***	**Stories**	**H:W ratio***	**Stories**	**H:W ratio ***
C-W	San Pablo Ave	100	4	0.43	5	0.50	6	0.65
C-NS	North Shattuck	95	2	0.23	4	0.50	6	0.65
C-SO	Solano	90	2	0.24	4	0.50	5	0.65
C-E	Elmwood	55	1	0.20	3	0.50	3	0.65

Concerns have been raised (most prominently in the Elmwood) about small business displacement, disruption, and use of density bonus projects, due to the remarkably small geography of upzoning compared to the much larger Shattuck and Solano zoning areas.

Alternate Three

Limit height increases to the Opportunity Sites identified in the staff report. However, to be compliant with our housing element's zoned capacity which requires approval by HCD, the Opportunity Sites should increase their height limits to compensate for the loss in housing capacity on smaller sites.

Without such increases, the overall capacity for new housing in the identified, high-resource neighborhoods would decrease which could jeopardize our housing element's approval by HCD.

The subcommittee was not able to consider the proposed Objective Design Standards nor the Small Business Protection proposals in detail and therefore recommends that the Planning Commission consider these items at the next Commission meeting.