

# Berkeley Corridors Zoning Update

## Community Workshop #1 Summary

May 1, 2025 | 6:30 – 8:30 pm | Zoom

### Overview

On Wednesday May 1st, 2025, the City hosted the first virtual Community Workshop on the Berkeley Corridors Zoning Update. The workshop was held from 6:30-8:30pm virtually on Zoom. The purpose of this Workshop was to:

- Provide an overview of the project background and objectives and engagement plan: encourage housing in high-resource areas to foster equity
- Share general information about zoning and Housing Element
- Provide forum for community members to share their desires and concerns related to housing along the three corridors
  - What should be preserved, improved, and transformed along these corridors?
  - Where is housing appropriate? What types of housing?

### In Attendance

**Members of the public:** approximately 70 meeting participants

**City of Berkeley:** Mayor Ishii, Councilmember O’Keefe, Councilmember Tregub, Jordan Klein, Uttara Ramakrishnan, Justin Horner, Branka Tatarevic, Faye Messner, Russell Roe, Robert Rivera, Cecelia Mariscal, Ava Dillard, Kanah Lee

**Raimi + Associates:** Chris Sensenig, Foteini Bouliari, Michelle Hernandez, Gina Kotos

**Plan to Place:** Dave Javid, Quentin Freeman, Dasha Ortenberg

### Meeting Summary

The Workshop began with a welcome from Mayor Ishii and the project team, followed by introductions and a brief live participant poll (see Appendix for results) to get a sense of who was joining the workshop. Raimi + Associates, the consulting firm leading the effort alongside city staff, gave a presentation on the project background, overview, and intent, as well as sharing high-level findings from their initial analyses on existing conditions of the three corridors. Next participants were split into five randomly selected groups of 12-13 people for small group discussions in breakout rooms, facilitated by three members of the project team. In small groups, participants discussed the following questions for each corridor:

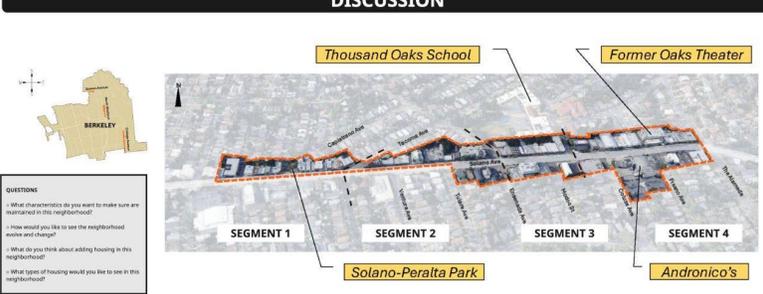
- *What characteristics do you want to make sure are maintained in this neighborhood?*
- *How would you like to see this neighborhood evolve and change?*
- *What do you think about adding housing to this neighborhood?*
- *What types of housing would you like to see in this neighborhood?*

Following the small group discussion, the workshop concluded with a brief report-back from each group about the key themes that arose during their discussions. Plan to Place and Raimi + Associates then wrapped up the meeting by sharing next steps and ways to stay involved in the Zoning Update project.

The feedback received for each corridor from the small group discussions, which were recorded in real time on virtual whiteboards, are summarized below. The comments are listed in order of priority based on the number of times they came up across all five of the small groups.

## Solano Avenue

### DISCUSSION



**QUESTIONS**

- What characteristics do you want to make sure are maintained in this neighborhood?
- How would you like to see the neighborhood evolve and change?
- What do you think about adding housing in this neighborhood?
- What types of housing would you like to see in this neighborhood?

### NOTES

#### CONVERSATION SUMMARY

- 1) More affordable housing - young families, condo type housing, housing for people who work here
- 2) Great parks, preserve & improve walkability
- 3) Traffic calming
- 4) Work towards decreasing car reliance
- 5) Coordinate with and learn from City of Albany (what they did on Solano)

### SOLANO AVENUE CORRIDOR



#### TOPIC

MAINTAIN & FAVORITE FEATURES    AREAS TO EVOLVE + CHANGE    THOUGHTS ON HOUSING

#### KEY

VERBAL COMMENTS    CHAT COMMENTS

**VERBAL COMMENTS**

Selena: Something that we are talking, are there building corridors that are being talked about what part of corridor are we talking about. Give us more context and context of what sort of housing you are talking about.

Mary: Another - Head of Oaks for Thousand Oaks neighborhood Association in Berkeley city.

People who contribute to housing need access to housing in the neighborhood.

Barbara: Can we have more affordable housing.

3 concerns from TOAK: 1. want the spaces to meet their own development with big apartment building. It will run the nature of the community. 2. Public transportation is not great in surrounding residential, more walk, concern about having the park for parking in the future. 3. Access who park up from corridor, that is in Berkeley or East Bay Area.

Call for more walkability in neighborhood, connection with local bus stop, more transit (Solano Ave) and bus service instead slower on through traffic, parking and local bike, using parking lot, bike lanes, and any parking problems, just consider more housing (2-3 buildings) but just local apartments, remain in Berkeley.

Reflex: Mention (Dale Blue Berkeley) - more housing on this corridor will help reduce car dependency and help with affordability.

Barb: Some affordability plan for the light rail that will be a concern and parking appropriately, including additional, low parking and more high walkability change services, building housing in a priority, build where resources are. Need annual survey and housing needs other than developers. Survey on how many people can bike, bus, or otherwise regularly either their residential job.

priority including businesses and local non housing nearby.

**CHAT COMMENTS**

John Cowley: The corridor has some prime spots for bookstore and opening (like Fargo and 70 station) come to find a corner though in that there is an existing ground floor, such space in neighborhood. I like the idea of more commercial along with light rail station. Side of Oaks, west of Oaks for instance, it's already they will have the character, and the light rail has each one space of use, as well as the investment to put in a commercial kitchen for a restaurant, if you can get a good building footprint for the sake of a new apartment building, then that's a good thing.

Reflex: More housing means their customers mean better stability of business.

Mary: Could we build up Berkeley Avenue in Berkeley in Berkeley something that can be addressed with this project?

1. Regulation for the city.

Annex: please consider open space and make the park, for the following three items:

housing, parks should be of all types, walking, walking, those who are looking at parking to their, please consider walking and use the bike lanes, etc. can't use bike in Berkeley.

2. Access: transportation for all types, walking, those who would like to use public in Berkeley.

3. Transportation: what are parking light rail and what would they be use for.

Barb: Need to get together the light rail plan, and what housing will be for Berkeley and Berkeley in Berkeley.

Above: snapshot of virtual whiteboard with notes from a small group discussion of Solano Ave

## Key Takeaways

- Prioritize protecting small businesses - create incentives and protections for maintaining small business and avoiding vacant street frontages in new developments
- Preserve local character, small businesses, parks that make Solano Ave what it is
- Provide diverse rental options, affordable housing for young families, and housing for people that work in this area
- Concerns over parking / transportation:
  - Concern over losing parking and car access for seniors
  - Concerns over traffic
  - Opportunity for traffic calming
  - Opportunity to decrease car reliance and promote walkability
  - Opportunity to invest in increasing public transportation in this corridor
- Promote coordination with the City of Albany

## What characteristics do you want to make sure are maintained in this neighborhood?

- Parks (e.g. Solano-Peralta, Thousand Oaks)
- Walkability
- Character of neighborhood as a neighborhood shopping street with a variety of local businesses
- Legacy businesses
- Solano Stroll

## How would you like to see this neighborhood evolve and change?

- Decrease reliance on cars, slow traffic
  - Traffic calming / road diet at Peralta & Solano, Colusa & Solano
  - Increased transit need - consider parking impacts and opportunities to mitigate by improving public transportation
    - Parking needn't be prioritized
- Increase *affordable* housing on corridors - opportunity to live closer to amenities
- Prioritize family housing, not just studios

## What do you think about adding housing to this neighborhood?

- Promote creation of *affordable* family housing, workforce housing in this neighborhood in key locations and off of the commercial strip
- Consider housing adjacent to existing businesses rather than adding housing to the strip to preserve character of the neighborhood
  - Ensure that new developments *don't* destroy the one-story commercial strips with legacy businesses - unlikely that those businesses will survive disruption, and be able to afford the new rent that a retail spot in a new development would cost, resulting in empty or chain retail spaces
  - Concern that large new developments will ruin nature of the community - consider design and sense of place
- Consider impacts on local schools, infrastructure
- Possible housing sites:
  - Solano and Colusa, Mechanics Bank
  - Wells Fargo
  - 76 Station
  - Off of the commercial strip

## What types of housing would you like to see in this neighborhood?

- Affordable housing for people that work in the area, young families, workforce housing
- Senior housing
- Housing that matches the sense of place and aesthetic character of the neighborhood
- Consider annual surveys about housing need types and use that data to determine needs rather than developers
- Housing that allows the existing small businesses to stay

# North Shattuck

### DISCUSSION

**QUESTIONS**

- What characteristics do you want to make sure are maintained in this neighborhood?
- How would you like to see the neighborhood evolve and change?
- What do you think about adding housing in this neighborhood?
- What types of housing would you like to see in this neighborhood?

### NORTH SHATTUCK AVENUE

ROSS STREET

SEGMENT 1

VINE STREET

SEGMENT 2

CEAR STREET

SEGMENT 3

VIRGINIA STREET

SEGMENT 4

### NOTES

#### CONVERSATION SUMMARY

- Maintain character
- Mixed Use on streetfront
- Walkability and bikeability
- How to pair affordability and opportunities for building amenities

MAINTAIN & FAVORITE FEATURES

AREAS TO EVOLVE + CHANGE

THOUGHTS ON HOUSING

**KEY**

**TOPIC**

**KEY**

**VERBAL COMMENTS**

What to preserve:  
 Arts/culture community spaces above first floor housing  
 Restaurants  
 Open to public part of way  
 Public housing (employee-owned)  
 Truckload retail  
 Men and the way  
 Farmer's market

What can be improved:  
 Ground floor retail use  
 Encouraging Arts and Culture activities that bring people out to the street front and create economic activity and a complete walkable housing and evening public transportation  
 Public housing that allows retail or specialty spaces for specialty uses  
 Public art opportunities  
 Opportunity for larger buildings through infill development where multifamily buildings already existing in the area  
 Only have setbacks in one direction  
 Increase public seating and landscaping  
 Use portion of potential space or other community space for public pedestrian connections  
 How to preserve affordable housing or ensure affordable housing will be offered in this area

Use of features:  
 Double type houses for inter neighborhood travel potentially easier to navigate the streets and more accessible to senior citizens

**CHAT COMMENTS**

Improvements:  
 Higher density  
 Higher public transportation  
 Higher access to other resources along setbacks to avoid "hardened" streets  
 Make sure there's enough low-income housing  
 Change access to other resources along setbacks to avoid "hardened" streets  
 Be more pedestrian friendly, create more public art and other amenities  
 Currently existing buildings making it difficult as a whole to walk. The parking changes you mention might increase these negative effects. While not specifically concerning zoning, Berkeley needs to address physical quality of the neighborhood fabric. These zoning changes will lead to... currently, sidewalks are often not at all... street parking is limited, neighborhood lacks adequate public green as well as open spaces between high-rise apartment buildings

I think I get how you feel about the T, B, or 70 bus. But it's close enough to BART that sometimes I walk back.

Above: snapshot of virtual whiteboard with notes from a small group discussion of North Shattuck

## Key Takeaways

- Create more affordable housing
  - Existing buildings and parking lots (e.g. Safeway) are opportunities for housing development with community-serving uses
- Increase walkability & bikeability, create wider sidewalks with front setbacks
- Maintain character of neighborhood, consider design of new development and how it meshes with existing urban fabric
- Maintain characteristic small businesses, create mixed use development
- Preserve parking
- Concern over where new housing will go

## What characteristics do you want to make sure are maintained in this neighborhood?

- Vine Street very charming, familiar shops
- Arts, culture, community spaces above first floor housing
- Restaurants (Cheeseboard, Sauls, Epicurean Garden)
- Mom & pop shops, small traditional retail
- Farmer's market
- Collective ownership (employee-owned) businesses
- Small businesses and pedestrian-centric experience

## How would you like to see this neighborhood evolve and change?

- Widen sidewalks, add housing to make Shattuck feel safer and more connected

- Promote re-use of space at Virginia & Shattuck, Bank of America vacant; on-street parking spaces could be opportunities for development
  - Creation of parklets with small seating areas
- Prioritize walkability, bus lane and public transportation, safety
  - Protected pedestrian intersections, public right of way
  - Traffic calming
- Promote Interesting & creative architecture in new developments
  - Stagger stories on taller buildings to avoid tunneling
- Create public space, community gathering places, arts & culture programming to bring people to the neighborhood and foster economic development
- Consider buildings that don't sacrifice existing uses
- Consider infill development on parking lots
- Consider a vacancy tax to encourage landlords to rent out empty spaces

### **What do you think about adding housing to this neighborhood?**

- Consider building up and on parking lots, move parking underground
  - Trader Joes on University & MLK a good example of this
- Promote localized creativity: use sidewalk spaces, vary frontages, consider cantilevering to maintain available building space while also maximizing sidewalk space
- Consider creating communal green spaces and public art in new developments
- Provide lots of housing in this transit friendly and resource dense neighborhood
- Consider neighborhood side streets for adding housing – gradient density, and avoid displacing commercial tenants
- Possible housing sites:
  - CVS parking lot: multi-story housing building or community gathering place
  - Safeway
  - Bank of America
  - Vacant retail between Vine and Rose
  - Vacant site where bookstore used to be

### **What types of housing would you like to see in this neighborhood?**

- Mixed income, not separated by income level
- Affordable for everyone, including young people and young families
- Low income housing
- Design should blend with urban fabric, feel organic
- Small businesses have underutilized back yards – possibility for small housing developments

# College Avenue

### DISCUSSION

**QUESTIONS**

- What characteristics do you want to make sure are maintained in this neighborhood?
- How would you like to see the neighborhood evolve and change?
- What do you think about zoning housing in this neighborhood?
- What types of housing would you like to see in this neighborhood?

### NOTES

#### CONVERSATION SUMMARY

- 1) **KEY TAKEAWAY 1 - Emphasize the charm and maintain the feeling of College Ave**
- 2) **KEY TAKEAWAY 2 - Housing variety: sizes, incomes, families, households**
- 3) **KEY TAKEAWAY 3 - Narrow streets and narrow buildings contribute to charming feel**
- 4) **KEY TAKEAWAY 4**

MAINTAIN & FAVORITE FEATURES

AREAS TO EVOLVE + CHANGE

THOUGHTS ON HOUSING

### COLLEGE AVENUE

**SEGMENT 1**

**SEGMENT 2**

**SEGMENT 3**

VERBAL COMMENTS	CHAT COMMENTS
<p>Housing variety: sizes, incomes, families, households</p> <p>Multi dwelling buildings don't always have to be for low income people</p> <p>Inclusionary percentages apply to any new market rate development in the corridors.</p> <p>Very charming shopping street: Narrower street, feel of students, mix of housing over commercial which seems successful.</p> <p>Nice commercial district in Berkeley - Quintessential Berkeley commercial nodes</p> <p>Upzoning - be concerned about maintaining this quality and charm</p> <p>downside: Being taken over by Chains</p> <p>Narrow Businesses - new business every 25-30 feet</p> <p>Inadequate sidewalks, need for off street parking, lot of traffic.</p> <p>Housing: new housing is appealing to students. Are we planning housing for families?</p> <p>Latest market cycle has developed a lot of student housing</p>	<p>(TYPE IN HERE)</p>

Above: snapshot of virtual whiteboard with notes from a small group discussion of College Ave

## Key Takeaways

- Maintain charm, scale, and character of College Ave
  - Livability and sustainability - consider ecological impacts of development
- Promote variety in housing - size, income, families, households
- Consider adding housing to wider corridors like Claremont rather than College
- Concern over parking and congestion
- Promote housing and transportation hand in hand
- Support for a commercial corridor with improved streetscapes, reduced vacancies, nearby housing

## What characteristics do you want to make sure are maintained in this neighborhood?

- Charm of vibrant shopping street, successful mix of housing over commercial, small-town feeling
- Scale: Narrow buildings and facades, narrow streets easy to cross
- Walkability
- Great restaurants
- Local businesses like Rialto Cinemas, Zachary's, Boichik Bagels, Le Mediterranean, Summer Kitchen

## How would you like to see this neighborhood evolve and change?

- Concern over upzoning a corridor that doesn't have capacity to support development:
  - Impacting the character of the neighborhood as a vibrant shopping street (businesses every 25-30 feet, housing over commercial)
  - Impacting local business and replacing with chains
  - Concern over stress on infrastructure
  - Not enough green space in neighborhood

- Address traffic and congestion:
  - Need on & off-street parking to support businesses
  - Consider unblocking parallel streets to facilitate flow of traffic, diverting traffic off of College
  - Need traffic calming measures
- Expand where commercial uses can go
- Replace driveways with street frontages, replace parking lots with housing
- Consider Telegraph Ave as a good example of a commercial corridor with housing
- Consider gateways to neighborhood as landmark and traffic calming

### **What do you think about adding housing to this neighborhood?**

- Consider developing family housing, not just student housing
- Consider single-story homes available for seniors
- Concern that changing zoning won't incentivize affordable housing
- Concern over state density bonus exception waiving local control over design standards
- Incorporate Alta Bates into design area
- Consider creative re-use of rear lots for added residential density
- Solicit feedback from people who don't currently live on these corridors, but might want to
- Concern over safety impacts of adding housing to the neighborhood
- Consider locating housing nearby the corridor, not directly on it
- Possible housing sites:
  - 7/11
  - Post office
  - Off of the College corridor - Claremont Ave

### **What types of housing would you like to see in this neighborhood?**

- Single story senior housing
- Family housing
- Mixed use retail / housing
- Maximize zoning capacity for housing, but be strategic *where* without disrupting local businesses
- Consider developing off of the corridor itself
- Narrow, light-filled apartments, potentially with courtyards
- Coordinate with City of Oakland: College in Oakland a good example of vibrant corridor

### **General Comments Applicable to All Corridors**

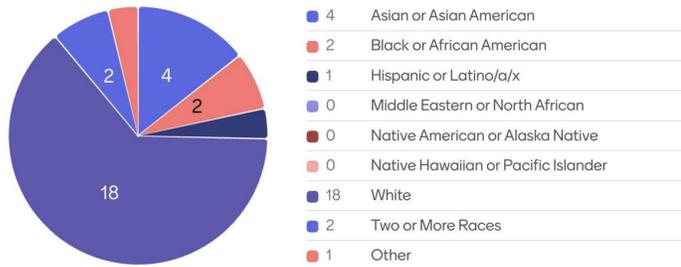
- Need accurate data on vacancies and types of housing needs
- City should conduct outreach to neighbors around these areas to ensure buy-in
- City should also conduct outreach to folks who might be interested in living in these areas if there were more housing available

# Appendix

## Snapshots from the in-meeting interactive Participant Poll

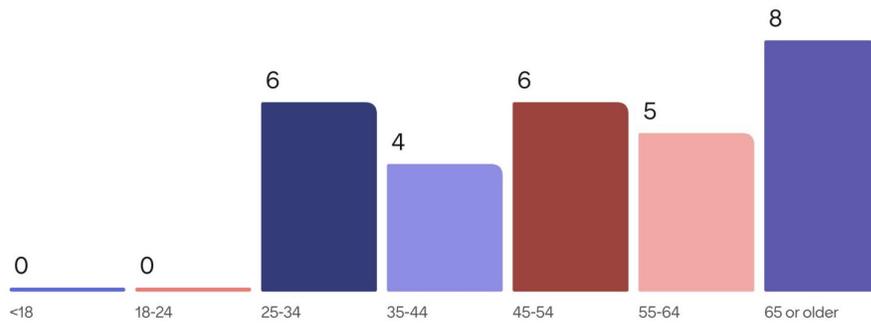
Mentimeter

What best describes your background?



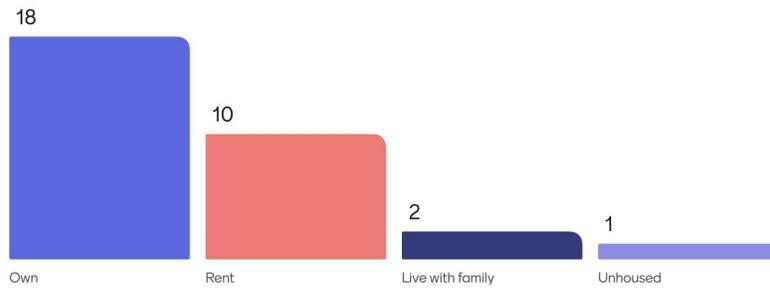
Mentimeter

How old are you?

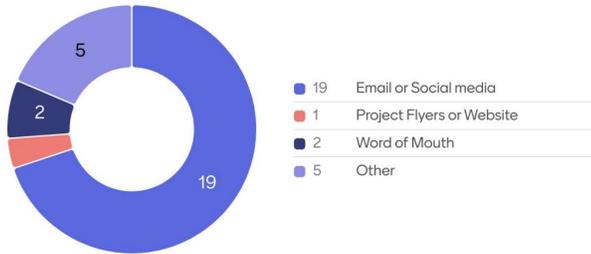


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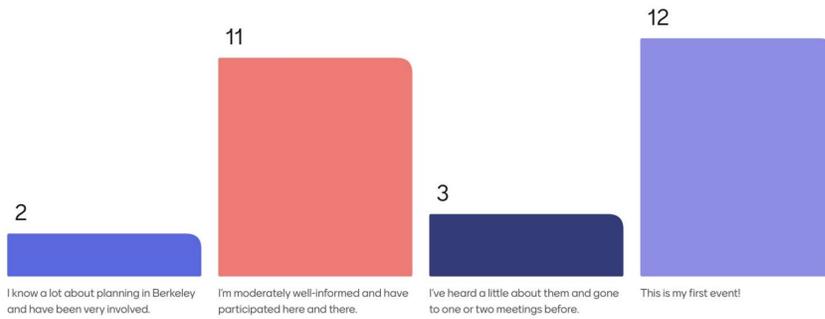
Which of the following best describes your housing situation?



How did you hear about today's event? (select all that apply)



What is your previous involvement with Berkeley planning efforts?

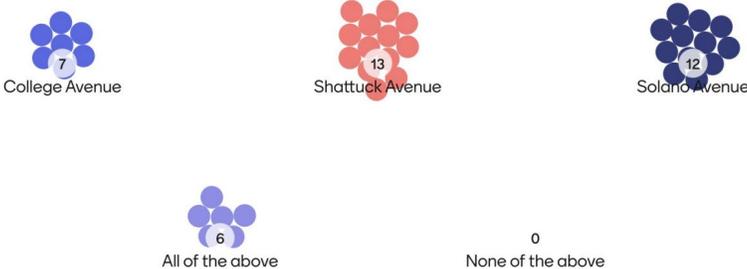


What zip code do you live in?

27 responses



I feel most strongly connected to:



What is your connection to Berkeley? Select all that apply.

