

Berkeley Neighborhoods Council: Corridors Zoning Update

Attendees: City staff, 30 + community members

Questions from Chat:

1. What about increased traffic? Evacuation routes?

- *Adding additional homes to an area usually means there will also be additional cars in the area. Locating new housing along existing commercial corridors near transit, however, is associated with the reduced use of private vehicles. High-resource areas are defined by their convenience and easy access to amenities, reducing the need for private vehicle travel.*
- *There are no planned changes to public rights of way or designated evacuation routes. None of the three corridors are located in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.*

2. Accessibility:

- **When considering Essential needs in high resource areas is Accessibility considered?**
- **Do you use an ADA consultant also to review accessibility in a proactive way to ensure equal access?**
- **What were the findings of this accessibility studies?**
- **Can info be provided on those studies that reviewed accessibility and planning for this project?**
 - *No specific ADA-centered accessibility study has been conducted for this project. The project does not include consideration of any reductions in accessibility-related requirements. In some cases, new development, which would be required to be built in accordance with the latest building standards, may be more accessible than existing, older buildings.*

3. Is the intent of the program to replace existing commercial buildings and businesses with housing?

- *It is not the explicit intent of the project to replace existing buildings with housing. Preserving the mixed-use character of these corridors while encouraging more housing is the intent. One question we are eager to receive feedback on is whether commercial uses should be required on the ground floors of buildings on these corridors, or whether there should be flexibility to provide residential uses on the ground floor.*

4. Please explain what the City means by “encouraging” developers?

- *Land use regulations that permit more development on a parcel may encourage private developers to consider building projects they would otherwise not consider. As existing regulations have not resulted in any significant residential development along these three corridors in many years, allowing more intensive development may encourage builders to consider building housing in these areas.*

5. Won't the new high-rise buildings eliminate sunlight for outdoor cafe's on Solano and in the Elmwood?

- *Land use regulations that permit taller buildings may result in buildings that cast new shadows, and there could be instances where areas that are currently not shaded would*

be. Some businesses on these corridors already provide shaded outdoor spaces through awnings and umbrellas, as well.

6. What businesses will locate in this new development, given high rents? And no parking?

- *The allowed uses table included [here](#) shows the types of businesses that are permitted along each of the corridors and what permits are required for them to operate. These uses, and permit requirements, can be changed as part of this project.*

7. If SB79 (Wiener) bill passes (allows 8 story buildings close to any bus stop)--how will this impact this local proposal?

- *SB 79 permits larger buildings located up to ½ mile from BART stations. This would include Shattuck Avenue south of Virginia to downtown BART. Neither Solano nor College Avenue are close enough to BART stations to be included. (Note: recent amendments to the bill have removed bus stops and significantly reduced the geographic applicability of SB 79)*

8. How do the zoning changes foster the addition of affordable housing?

- *Larger residential projects are subject to the City's inclusionary zoning requirements, which can be met by either providing on-site affordable housing or paying an in-lieu fee into the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund. More permissive zoning may also encourage the use of the State Density Bonus, which allows larger buildings if they include on-site affordable housing.*

9. What happens to the buildings already in place in these areas?

- *The proposed zoning changes would not require the development of any specific property. If a property owner were interested in redeveloping their property, they could add to an existing building or propose the demolition of an existing building and its replacement with a new building.*

10. How many housing units have already been added to meet the 8900 new units goal given to Berkeley by the state?

- *Each year, the City prepares an Annual Progress Report (APR) on our General Plan and housing goals. The most recent APR was presented to City Council in March and [can be found here](#). Page 4 of that report shows that 1,654 units have so far counted towards meeting our RHNA allocation of 8,934.*

11. Design:

- *Curious about the "design parameters" to fit into neighborhood you mentioned. Is this particular to commercial zones?*
 - *Design and development standards can both be part of this project. The project does not include the creation of subjective design guidelines, however. The goal would be to create objective standards for new development.*
- *What happened to the City's design standards/guidelines which have been discussed forever but never seem to appear?*
 - *The development of design standards or guidelines would require additional funding from the City Council.*

12. Won't this hurt the Elmwood Theatre--our last remaining movie theatre in Berkeley?

- *A goal of the project is to encourage local economic development, not degrade it, and the Elmwood Theater is a treasured local business. For example, the City Council recently removed long-standing quotas on food service businesses in the Elmwood in large part to allow the Elmwood Theater to serve food.*

- 13. How is "community" defined? The entire city or neighbors of the Corridors?**
- *"Community" has many meanings, depending on context. Our outreach has included residential communities adjacent to these corridors, the local business community of local merchants, as well as the broader, Berkeley-wide community that has an interest in citywide issues.*
- 14. What is the formula that triggers density bonus? How many "affordable" units allow developers to get the density bonus?**
- *The City's procedures for implementing the State Density Bonus [can be found here](#).*
- 15. When do Planners include how increasing density increases the value of the land which in turn is born out in the cost of rent?**
- *Not all parcels along each of the corridors can result in economically feasible development, even if the parcel is upzoned. A possible effect of rezoning could be to increase the development potential of a parcel, which could increase its value. However, the rent a particular use can demand is more likely to affect the value of the land than the value of land dictating the rent. For example, in general, the price I pay for a house does not determine how much rent I can charge for it; it's the rent that I can get from renting it out that helps determine what the house's cost. That all said, rent increases are not solely the product of land use regulations; market conditions, scarcity, and availability of opportunities also play a role. For instance, home values have continued to increase in Berkeley without underlying changes to land use regulations.*
- 16. What do you consider a success? In all this rezoning—empty stores? Increased traffic? Less solar? Fewer families with children?**
- *The goals of the proposed project can be found on Slide 10 of [the presentation found here](#).*