

Berkeley Civic Center

Protection



Feeling safe - protection against traffic & accidents



Feeling secure - protection against crime & violence



Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences

Got to have these ...

Comfort



Opportunities to walk/cycle



Opportunities to stop & stay



Opportunities to sit



Opportunities to see



Opportunities to talk & listen



Opportunities for play & exercise

... without these no one will stay

Delight



Dimensioned at a human-scale



Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate



Aesthetic qualities and positive sensory experience

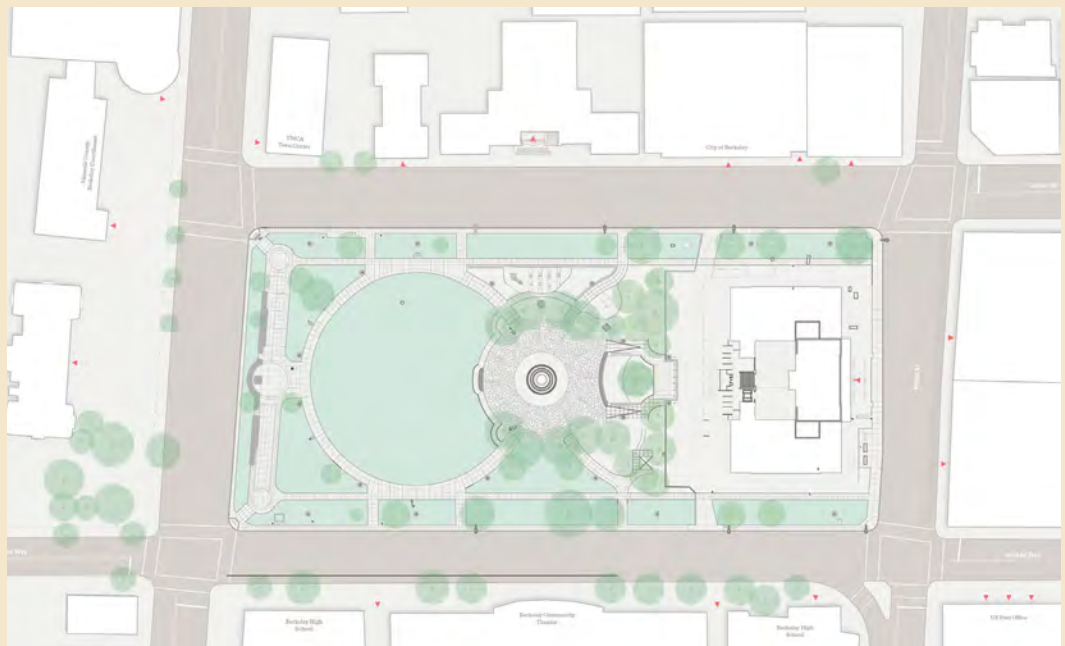
These make the difference between good & great places

12 Quality Criteria

Berkeley's Civic Center was assessed using the Twelve Quality Criteria, a Gehl tool for researching how public spaces are experienced by their users. The tool was used to evaluate whether different features of the public space are protective, comfortable and enjoyable for people spending time there.

← 12 Quality Criteria Civic Center Assessment

Civic Center, Existing Conditions →



1.2.1

An overview*

Historic Structures

Rehabilitation of Historic Structures

**For a more detailed look at the historical context, please refer to the Historic Structure Reports in the appendix.*

An implementable vision plan for the Berkeley Civic Center should be firmly rooted in an understanding of not only its current configuration and uses, but also its past context, associated important persons and pivotal events which have influenced the design and development of Berkeley's premier civic space. To that end, the project team has completed a historic structure report for both City Hall (Maudelle Shirek Building) and the Veterans Memorial Building. Additionally, a Historic Landscape Analysis has been completed for Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park.

The two Historic Structures Reports include a historical narrative, building and site descriptions, chronology of development and use, identification of character-defining features, integrity analysis, conditions assessment, and treatment recommendations. The Historic

Landscape Analysis includes identification of character-defining features, chronology of development and change, conditions assessment, and treatment recommendations. These documents are intended to help guide and inform future projects at both buildings and future improvements to the park.

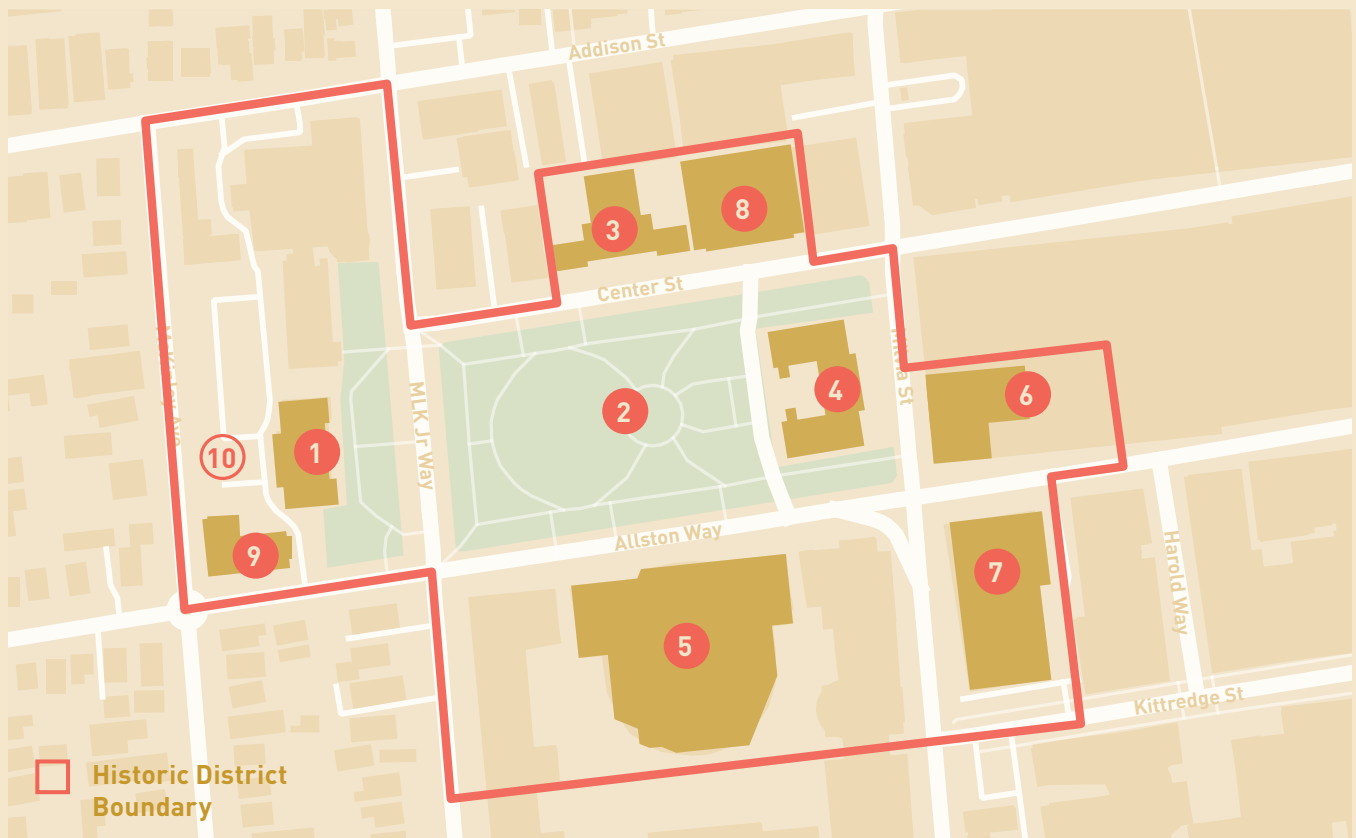
The Berkeley Civic Center Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998 and is also a City of Berkeley designated Landmark District. The Civic Center Park and nine nearby buildings, including City Hall and the Veterans Building, are contributing resources to the historic district. These resources, when considered collectively, create a distinct sense of place; each resource valued for a different historical association and contribution to the district and to Berkeley as a whole.

Additionally, City Hall is recognized as individual City Landmark #7 (1975) and the Veterans Memorial Building is individual City Landmark #89 (1985). Civic Center Park is included in the Historic District (Landmark #208, 1998), but is not individually designated.

It is important to remember that any proposed changes to these resources are subject to compliance with The Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and are under the purview of the Berkeley Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC). In addition, should any Federal funding be secured, any project that makes use of those monies, would be subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

- 1 Maudelle Shirek Building
- 2 Martin Luther King Jr Civic Center Park
- 3 The Veterans Memorial Building
- 4 The Federal Land Bank Building/ Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Building
- 5 Berkeley Community Theater
- 6 Young Men's Christian Association Building
- 7 United States Post Office
- 8 State Farm Insurance Companies Building
- 9 City Hall Annex
- 10 Hall of Justice (*demolished*)

↓ Civic Center Historic Resources



Maudelle Shirek Building, (aka) Old City Hall

The Maudelle Shirek Building, also known as Old City Hall, is a local and national landmark constructed in 1906, has an architectural grandeur and prime location at Civic Center Park that commands a use that is commensurate with the building's significance. The building contains several character-defining features, including the main entry hall and central spiral staircase, that must be retained. The north and south wings on the main and upper floors, however, have been heavily renovated over time and offer large open spaces that may be rehabilitated to accommodate any number of uses. The parking lot to the building's south offers an ideal location for an addition.

The building's original main formal entry is raised 11 feet above grade, posing a challenge, but not an insurmountable one, for universal access. A number of additional building material surveys, including ones for water intrusion and roof slab condition, must be completed to understand the full extent of repair required for the reuse of this building.



Inappropriate
building material



Deferred
maintenance



Overgrown
planting



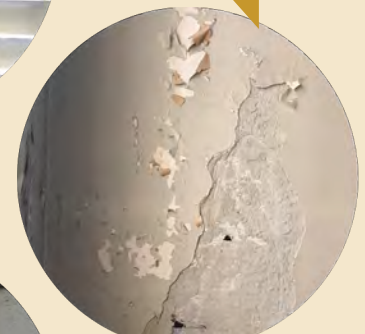
Damage

Veterans Memorial Building

The Veterans Memorial Building retains a remarkable amount of original interior building materials and decorative finishes that require careful conservation. The primary character-defining space, and heart of the building, is the auditorium, offering a highly sought-after mid-size performance space. The large rooms in the wings of the main and upper floors offer additional space for gathering, performance or practice. The first and second floors should remain in their historical configuration, while the basement could be divided into smaller spaces. The courtyards to the north and south of the auditorium and the roof present potential locations for additions or public outdoor space. The largest and most expensive challenge to rehabilitating this building is a seismic retrofit, a result of the building's unique combination of construction types, concrete and wood. Significant water damage at the north and south stairways must also be immediately addressed to ensure the building's future reuse.



The building **INTERIOR** shows signs of excessive water damage



The building **EXTERIOR** has consistent cracking and staining



Seismic Upgrade

Both Old City Hall and the Veterans Memorial Building were constructed prior to any comprehensive seismic building standards and must be seismically retrofitted. Two options have been considered for each building;

A **Basic Performance Objective for Existing Buildings (BPOE)** scheme is built to code and allows safe egress from the building and prevents the building from collapse during a seismic event, however, the building may incur damages that are exceedingly expensive to repair.

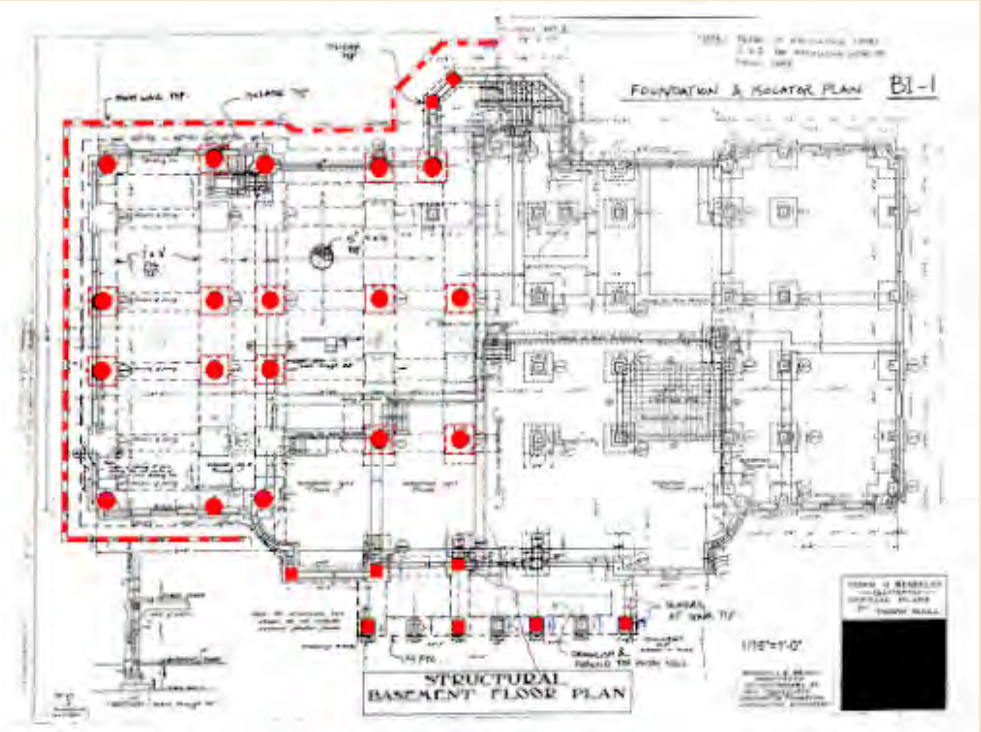
An **Immediate Occupancy (IO)** scheme allows safe egress and provides enhanced protection to the building such that it could be reoccupied almost immediately following a seismic event.

A BPOE retrofit scheme is very common for existing buildings and can accommodate any number of building uses. An IO scheme is typically undertaken for buildings that house “essential services,” such as hospitals and emergency services, that must remain open in the case of community crisis.



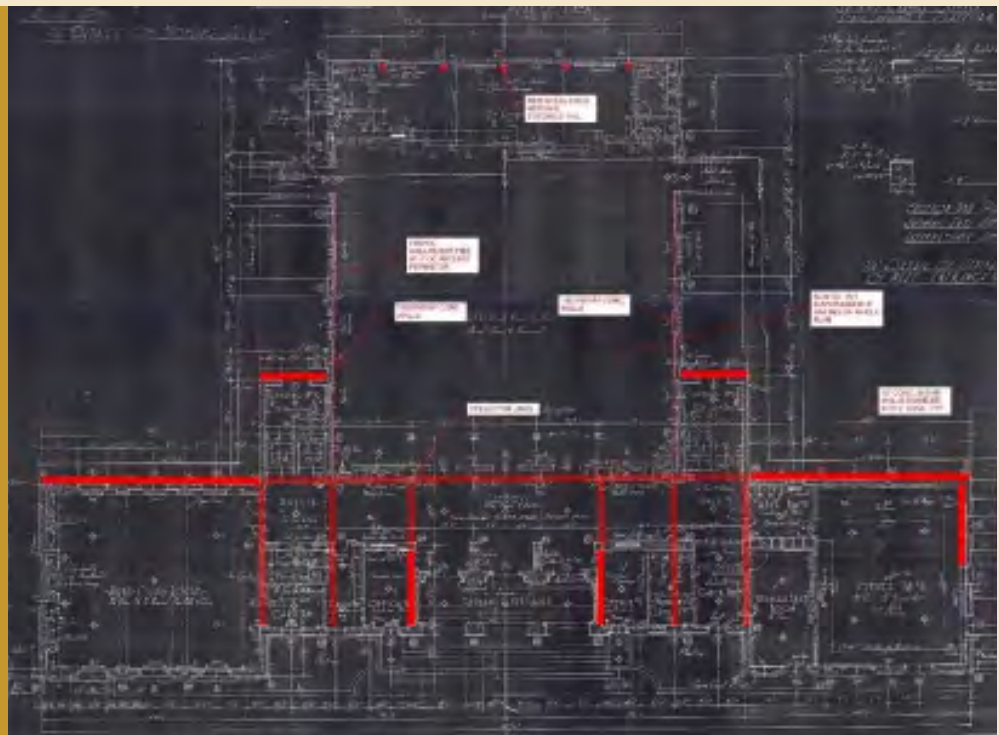
Maudelle Shirek Building, Old City Hall

Preferred Seismic Upgrade: IO (Enhanced) →



Veterans Memorial Building

Preferred Seismic Upgrade: BPOE (Code) →

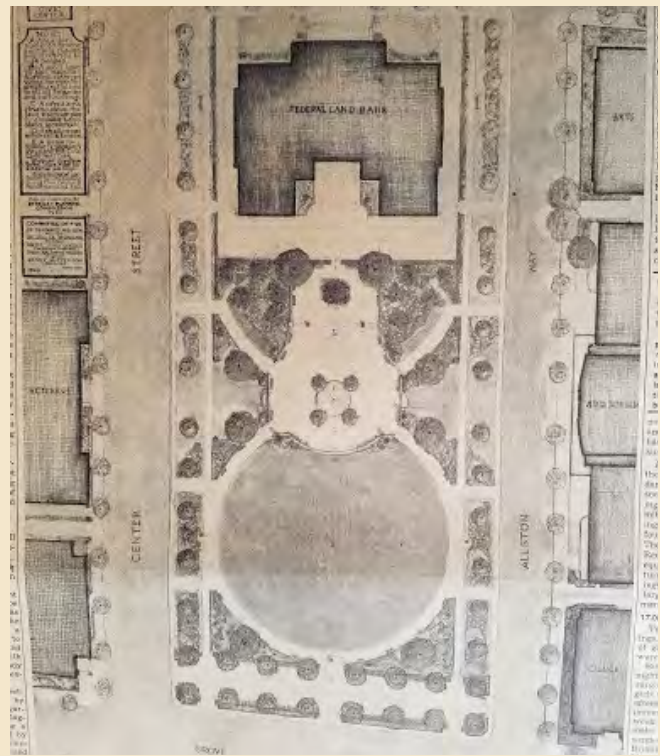


Reference: Seismic Evaluation report by IDA Structural Engineers, April 2019

Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park

As a contributing resource to the Berkeley Civic Center National Register District, the Martin Luther King Junior Civic Center Park is afforded a high level of protection by the State Office of Historic Preservation. Any proposed revisions to the Park are subject to review and approval through local and state approval processes. The Historic Landscape Assessment (*See Appendix*) was written in accordance with The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes. The treatment recommendations are consistent with these standards. Each states a preferred approach per preservation best practices, acknowledging that while some proposed alterations may be more strident than recommended, they are worthy of consideration given the City's goals for the Park and its future.

The City of Berkeley has challenged the design team to imagine schemes that push the limits of the existing Civic Center District, schemes that are



justified by a collective desire for change. Through an extensive outreach effort, the design team has accumulated input from many residents, user groups, organizations, City department and agency representatives, and elected and appointed officials within the City of Berkeley. The collected evidence speaks to both the lost potential of the Park and the desire to see it brought back to life through physical and programmatic interventions.

Most agree that the Civic Center Park has functioned significantly below its potential for quite some time. Several design elements of the Park, including the indirect circulation paths, the oversized central lawn, and the shady fountain terrace, act as deterrents to would-be Park users. A lack of

cleanliness and maintenance to the Park, its plantings and physical urban fabric, the non-functional fountain, and the removal of places for seating also contribute an uninviting Park experience. Given the public underutilization of the Park by most residents except during planned events or high school lunch times, the most visible users are unhoused individuals who have come to regard the Park as their home, which has regrettably changed the community's perception of the Park.

It is unclear how aware Berkeley residents are of this Park's status as a historic landmark and perhaps an awareness of the role the Park has played in the City's history would shift public opinion and help grow a deeper appreciation for it as a place. Civic Center Park, and indeed the entirety of the Civic Center Historic District, is awaiting its next act. A careful balance between



↑ Civic Center Park viewed from 2180 Milvia Street in 2019

preservation principles and powerful new design ideas is required to create a welcoming, usable and lively Park that meets the project goals and anchors the historical Park in the lives and hearts of Berkeley for generations to come.

We encourage and welcome a healthy conversation about respect for history and the vitality of new ideas. This is a crucial next step. Let's dive in!

For a more detailed look at the historical context, please refer to Appendix.



↑ Civic Center Park viewed from 2180 Milvia Street in the 1940s

1.2.2

Policy Context

The Civic Center Area Vision Plan considers the general Civic Center Area and focuses specifically on the Veterans Memorial Building, Maudelle Shirek Building, and Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. Civic Center Park. Guiding planning documents include:

- Berkeley’s General Plan (2002)
- The Downtown Area Plan & EIR (2012)
- The Street & Open Space Improvement Plan (2012)
- The Downtown Design Guidelines,
- Berkeley’s Pedestrian Master Plan (2010)
- Berkeley’s Bicycle Plan (2017)
- Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC updated through 2020).

Overarching Themes

A review of policies in the guiding policy documents reveals common high-level aspirations distilled here as overarching themes.

Community Participation

Berkeley’s General Plan’s underscores the importance of community participation in

decisions relating to land use, community character, and open space.

Government, Education & Culture

The General Plan and the Downtown Area Plan (DAP) recognize the Civic Center as a valuable opportunity to bring together complementary government, education and cultural uses.

(Figure 1.1) Allowable Uses & Development Standards →

The Civic Center Zoning Overlay District (2014) reserves the area for community-oriented activities and uses and encompasses the Veterans Memorial Building, Maudelle Shirek Building, and MLK Jr. Civic Center Park. Construction on the Veterans Memorial and Maudelle Shirek sites would also need to conform with underlying development standards for the “C-DMU Corridor” and “Residential R-2” districts respectively.

Historic Preservation & Context-Sensitive Design

The DAP calls for conservation of district subareas with strong historic identity, while encouraging context-sensitive design to allow for changes to the built environment over time.

Pedestrian Priority

When considering Civic Center Area improvements, vehicular traffic should be calmed and pedestrian-friendly environments should take priority.

An Inclusive Vibrant Place

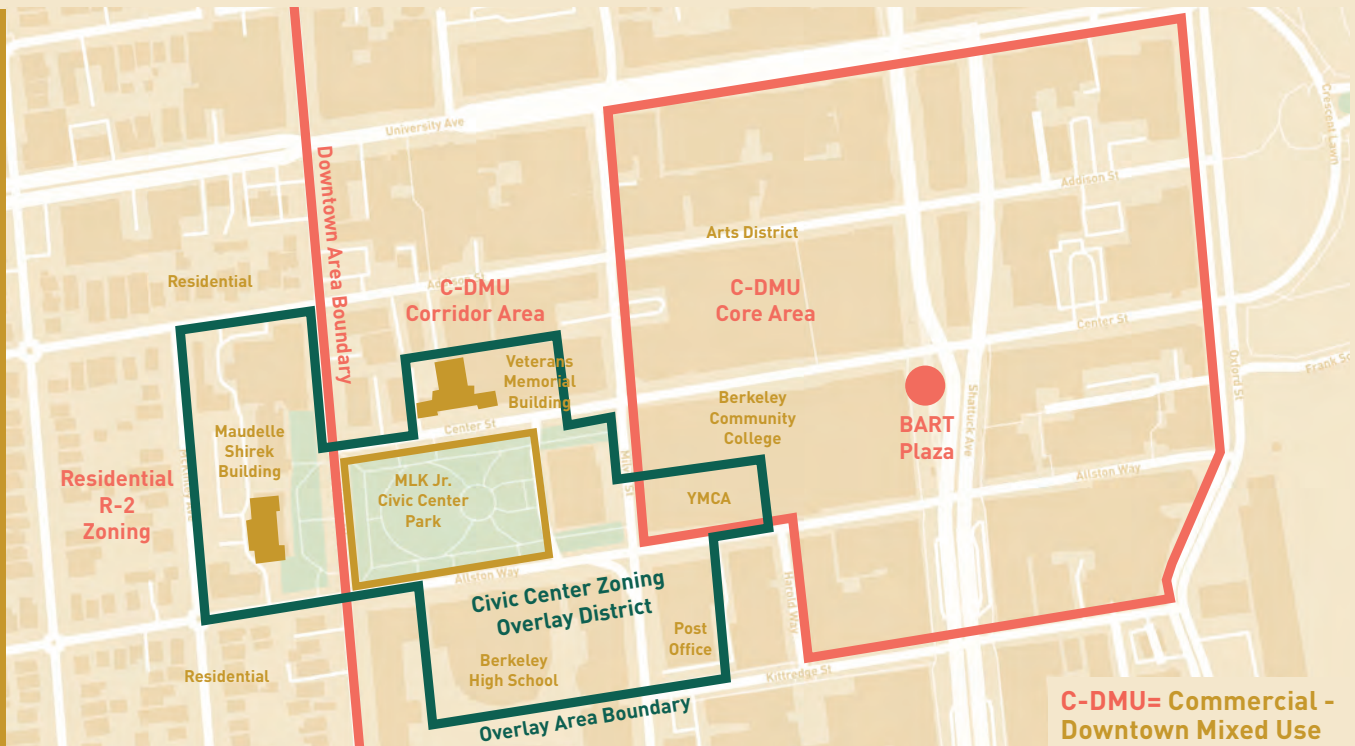
Multiple planning documents cite the Downtown and Civic Center Area as the “heart of Berkeley” to be enjoyed by everyone in the community, regardless of age or ability.

Civic, Cultural, Educational & Community Uses

Adopted policies and regulations emphasize community-oriented uses in the Civic Center Area. Berkeley’s 2002 General Plan Policy Land Use Number 22 (LU-22) stipulates:

Maintain the Civic Center as a cohesively designed, well-maintained, and secure place for community activities, cultural & educational uses, and essential civic functions & facilities.

The DAP Policy Land Use Number 1.4 underscores that the importance of civic uses to the area. For example government, education and recreation uses and community and social service functions are made more accessible to



Existing Conditions

all given superior transit access and the central location within the city.

The Veterans Memorial Building, Maudelle Shirek Building, and Civic Center Park are within Berkeley’s “Civic Center District Overlay” area and subject to a 50-foot height limit and restrictions on use (BMC Chapter 23E.98). The Overlay District was established in 2014 to preserve and promote the area as a place of cultural heritage, historic preservation, civic and community activity, and cultural and education uses. Overlay District boundaries and allowable uses are noted in Figure 1.1 and below.

East of Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. Way, most of the Overlay District falls within the Downtown Area Plan (DAP) boundary and C-DMU Downtown Mixed Use District (BMC Chapter 23E.68). Unless superseded by the Civic Center Overlay District, improvements east of MLK Jr. Way must conform to DAP policies and C-DMU “Buffer Area” regulations.

West of Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. Way, the Maudelle Shirek Building conforms with Overlay District provisions but is otherwise a non-conforming use within Berkeley’s “R-2 Restricted Two-Family Residential District” (BMC Chapter 23D.28).

Uses Permitted in Civic Center Overlay District (BMC Chapter 23E.98.030)

- Libraries
- Judicial Courts
- Museums
- Parks and Playgrounds
- Public Safety and Emergency Services
- Government Agencies and Institutions
- Public Schools / Educational Facilities
- Non-Profit Cultural, Arts, Environmental, Community Service, and Historical Organizations
- Live Performance Theatre
- Public Market

Circulation Improvements →

Existing and planned pedestrian and bicycle circulation improvements include: MLK Jr. Way signal & crosswalk improvements at Center Street and Allston Way (connecting west), separated bike-way improvements along Milvia (connecting north/south), and landscape & pedestrian amenities along Center Street & Allston Way (connecting east).

Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park

While MLK Jr. Civic Center Park occupies a central place in Berkeley, the Downtown Street & Open Space Improvement Plan (SOSIP) did not address the design of or funding of MLK Jr. Civic Center Park improvements. Comprehensive planning for Civic Center Park has not been undertaken since the 1990s. Only general guidance is provided by the Open Space Element of Berkeley’s General Plan (2002) to:

involve the community in “every aspect” of park design (Policy OS-5),

give high priority to disadvantaged and underserved populations (Policy OS-7), and

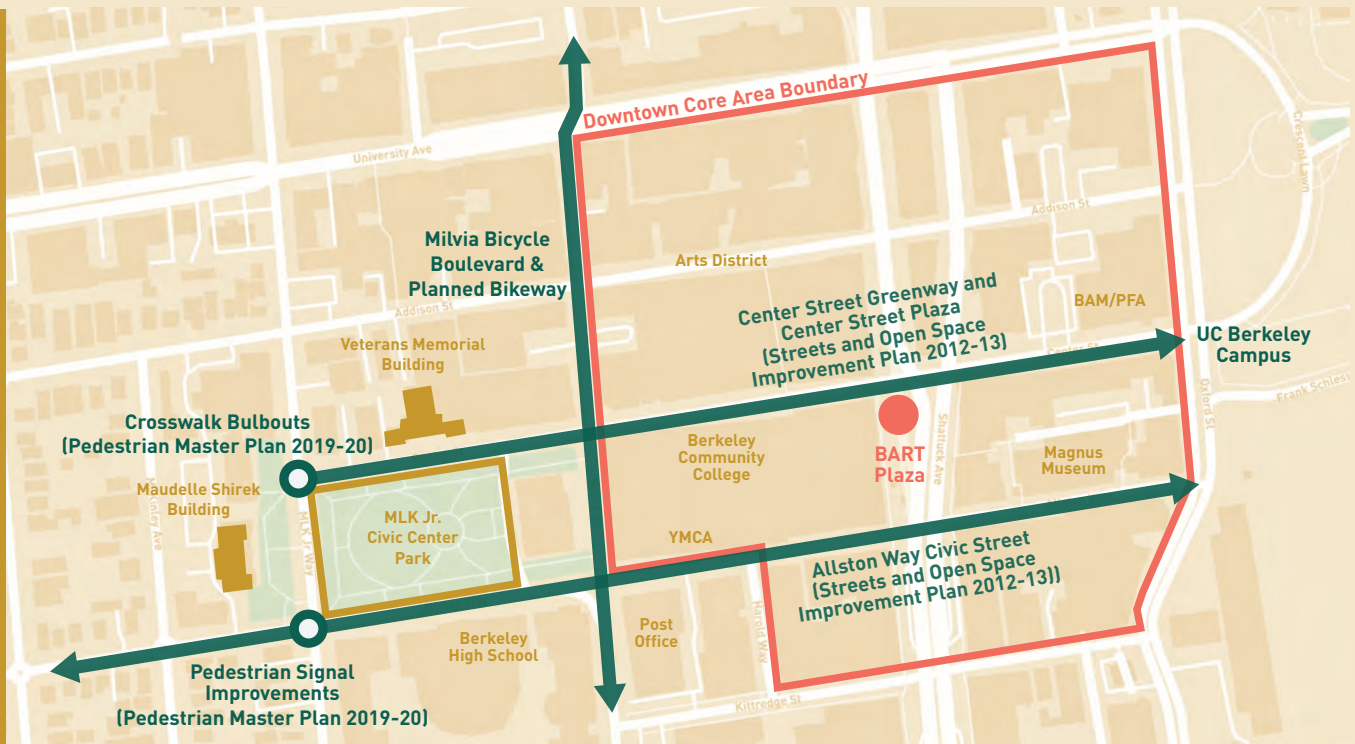
prioritize limited fiscal resources to maintaining and improving existing open space and recreation facilities.

Circulation Improvements

Berkeley’s General Plan, DAP, and SOSIP emphasize pedestrian-friendly environments, bicycle connectivity, and traffic calming. The DAP states explicitly to “give pedestrians priority,” and the General Plan says to consider

the partial or complete closure of Center Street ... to promote pedestrian ... vitality and enhance Civic Center Park use and appearance. (Policy LU-20)

Regarding Center Street, the SOSIP says:



Existing Conditions

Create a continuous green corridor and pedestrian connection between Civic Center Park, BART and Center Street Plaza. (Policy OS-1.6)

Allston Way also connects to BART and Shattuck Avenue, and is one of few streets that extends without interruption from West Berkeley to UC Berkeley. While Allston's narrow right-of-way limits options, SOSIP says Allston should become a "civic street" that uses light standards, paving, and other special features to make Allston more recognizable and to support pedestrian activity (OS-1.15). Additionally, Allston is a principal point of entry to Berkeley High School, and is a major automobile drop-off zone and place of students coming and going. In 2014, permeable brick pavers were installed on Allston from MLK Jr. Way to Milvia Street to capture urban run-off (stormwater carrying oil and other street related pollutants) and calm traffic.

The Milvia Bicycle Boulevard is an important bicycle facility that connects to North and South Berkeley. Milvia is slated for improvement from being a bicycle route (where bikes mix with traffic north of Allston) to having a "bike track" (separated from traffic) for its entirety in Downtown.

Environmental Sustainability

The Downtown Area Plan promotes buildings, streets and open space that model best practices for sustainability (Goal ES-2). Relevant to the Civic Center,

DAP calls for sustainability by calling for:

- *re-use of buildings or portions of buildings (ES-4.1),*
- *green (LEED Gold or equivalent) building performance (ES-4.1-4.9),*
- *giving priority to pedestrians over vehicles (ES-3.5), and*
- *green streets and green infrastructure (ES-3.2 & ES-5.1-5.3).*

Building Re-Use & Context-Sensitive Design

Alterations to and new construction associated with the Veterans Memorial Building, Maudelle Shirek Building, and MLK Jr. Civic Center Park will be subject to design review by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, which will implement DAP policies including:

Preserve historic buildings and sites of Downtown, and provide where appropriate for their adaptive reuse and/or intensification. (LU-1.1)
Encourage continuity and harmony

Center Street Greenway Connection →

Center Street connects the Civic Center area to BART, Shattuck businesses, Berkeley Community College, and UC Berkeley's campus. Berkeley's Downtown Street & Open Space Improvement Plan illustrates how landscape improvements and pedestrian amenities might be added to Center to better integrate the Civic Center area with the rest of Downtown.

between old and new construction ...[such as through] materials, cadence/modulation, color, fenestration & entry patterns, cornice lines, massing, roof form, building “build-to lines,” and other architectural devices. (HD-3.1) [R]ecruit a community-serving use for [the Veterans Memorial Building’s] main floor. (LU-1.4)

DAP policies and BMC zoning regulations do not require that historic building reuse and intensification provide the same amount of on-site parking and open space as new construction.

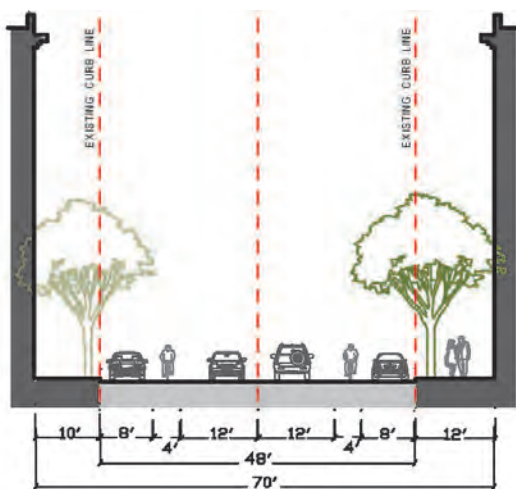
The Veterans Memorial Building and MLK Civic Center Park are in the Commercial – Downtown Mixed Use (C-DMU) zoning district which comes with the following pertinent parking requirements; only substantial net additional floor area would

be subject to parking requirements. If net new floor area exceeds the existing floor area, plus 1,000 square feet or up to 25% of existing floor area whichever is less, the parking requirement can be modified with a Use Permit because the building is within one-third mile of BART and within one-quarter mile of a publicly-accessible parking facility. Alternatively, a fee may be paid in lieu of required parking on-site.

The Maudelle Shirek building lies within the Restricted Two-Family Residential (R-2). For development on the Maudelle Shirek parcel, R-2 explicit off-street parking requirements are limited to: dwellings, community care facilities, libraries, and rooming houses. The Zoning Adjustment Board is to determine on-site parking requirements for all other uses, including community and civic uses envisioned by the Civic Center Vision Plan.

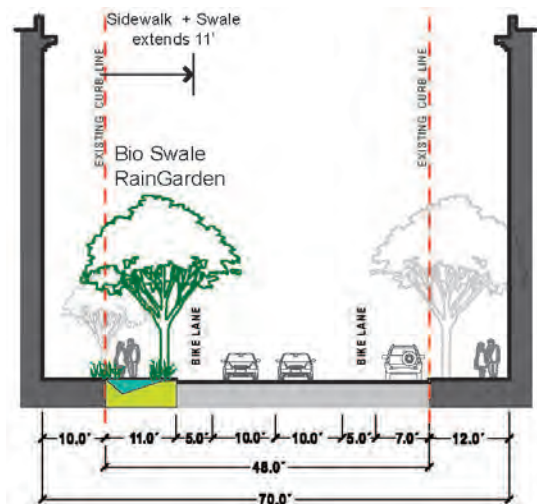
↓ Center St, Existing Condition

Source: Berkeley’s Streets and Open Space Improvement Plan (SOSIP 2012-13)



↓ Center St, Greenway Concept

Source: Berkeley’s Streets and Open Space Improvement Plan (SOSIP 2012-13)





1.2.3

Public Space Public Life Study



1.2.3

Public Space, Public Life Study

A Gehl-developed method focused on putting people at the center of urban change – measure what you care about!

As a fundamental component of the site assessment, a Public Life, Public Space Study was conducted in Berkeley Civic Center to better understand how people use the space today. The daily rhythms and patterns of public life were measured and recorded as part of a people-first approach to design.

As a matter of course, all cities conduct detailed analyses of traffic and parking. Motor vehicles are ever-present in the planning process. It is unsurprising then that many plans and policies are oriented around the behavior of cars, instead of people. However, a growing number of cities now count and observe how people actually use the city, how they move through the city and what they do when they spend time there.

Measuring how people use space allows cities to optimize public space for human comfort and active mobility, allowing for holistic solutions that take all users of the public realm into account.

Why study public life?

Collecting public life data allows us to:

- Identify opportunities to increase quality of life for people
- Tell stories and make evidence-based arguments for change
- Measure and re-measure to understand and visualize the impact that our work has on people



Public Life is the social activity that takes place in everyday public spaces – on streets, in parks and plazas, and in the spaces between buildings. It’s what people create together when they live their lives outside of their homes, schools, workplaces and cars.



Public Life data collected in and around Civic Center

Mode Movement Counts

Measures how many people pass through a space and by what means. These counts note whether people are moving as a pedestrian, cyclist, mobility-impaired person, or on an e-scooter/skateboard.



Age & Gender Movement Counts

Measures how many people pass through a space while also noting the age and gender representation of each person. Age and gender representation data gives us a better sense of who is using a particular space, who does not feel welcome to do so, or who is unable to access it at all. As this tool provides observational data, it will not always accurately reflect the gender identities of people in the space.



Stationary Activity Mapping

Provides insights into where people are spending time, what they are doing, and how they are occupying space. It provides a snapshot of all the activities happening in the survey area at a given time and records people's observed age and gender representation.



Our Survey's Guiding Questions

- What are the daily patterns of life in Civic Center?
- Who does Civic Center invite and who is missing?
- How are the surrounding buildings supporting (or hindering) Public Life?
- How is Civic Center connected to the pulse of activity on Shattuck Avenue?