



Office of the City Manager

September 1, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: *DWR* Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Subject: Update on San Pablo Avenue Specific Planning Efforts

SUMMARY

The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan (SPA SP) effort commenced in June 2023. This memo provides an update on the current status of the planning process and shares an overall timeline and key milestones. The planning effort seeks to engage community members to create a vision for the future of the corridor that considers regional and citywide goals for access to housing, equity, safer streets, sustainability, and an economically vibrant commercial corridor.

The process includes an outreach strategy that engages a diverse group of stakeholders, especially community members living and working within and adjacent to the plan areas. The City will create a web page for the project and a dedicated email address for the public to provide comments. The public process includes a variety of methods and activities to broaden participation, including:

- Small Group Interviews
- Community Leader Interviews
- Public Workshops
- Technical Advisory Group
- Community Survey
- Pop-up Workshops/Tabling
- Targeted Intercept Surveys
- Site Tour

The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan will primarily focus on land use policies and economic development programs, such as allowed uses, development standards, and employment and industry trends. The plan will outline programs and policies to encourage and support diverse housing, commercial activities, and public amenities. In addition, the plan will assess current multimodal transportation conditions and needs, summarizing potential parking and loading impacts in conjunction with public improvements. The City is coordinating with Alameda County Transportation

Commission (ACTC)¹ and AC Transit,² which currently have multiple safety enhancements, in addition to bus and bike lane projects underway along the San Pablo Avenue corridor.

BACKGROUND

Plan Bay Area 2050 (2021) is the long-range regional planning effort undertaken by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) to outline strategies for growth and investment in the nine-county Bay Area region through the year 2050. Plan Bay Area 2050 envisions new development concentrated in Priority Development Areas (PDAs). PDAs are places with convenient public transit service prioritized by local governments for housing, jobs and services. Jurisdictions with PDAs have access to dedicated funding for plans and infrastructure improvements focused in those areas.

In December 2020, MTC and ABAG released a Call for Letters of Interest for \$7.8 million in PDA Planning and Technical Assistance funds for jurisdictions in the Bay Area Region. The City of Berkeley submitted a Letter of Interest in February 2021 and was awarded \$750,000 in PDA Planning Grant Funds for the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan.

In April 2023, MTC and ABAG awarded the consulting team a contract to assist the City of Berkeley with the development of the specific plan. The project team will consist of a variety of City departments which include staff from the Land Use Planning Division, Transportation Division, and Office of Economic Development, as well as firms such as Community Design + Architecture (landscape architecture, transportation planning, urban design), Urban Planning Partners (land use), InterEthnica (outreach and engagement, translation services), Street Level Advisors (economic development and housing), and other firms providing research and technical analysis. The terms of the grant require that the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan be completed by the end of 2025.

SPECIFIC PLAN AREA AND STUDY AREA

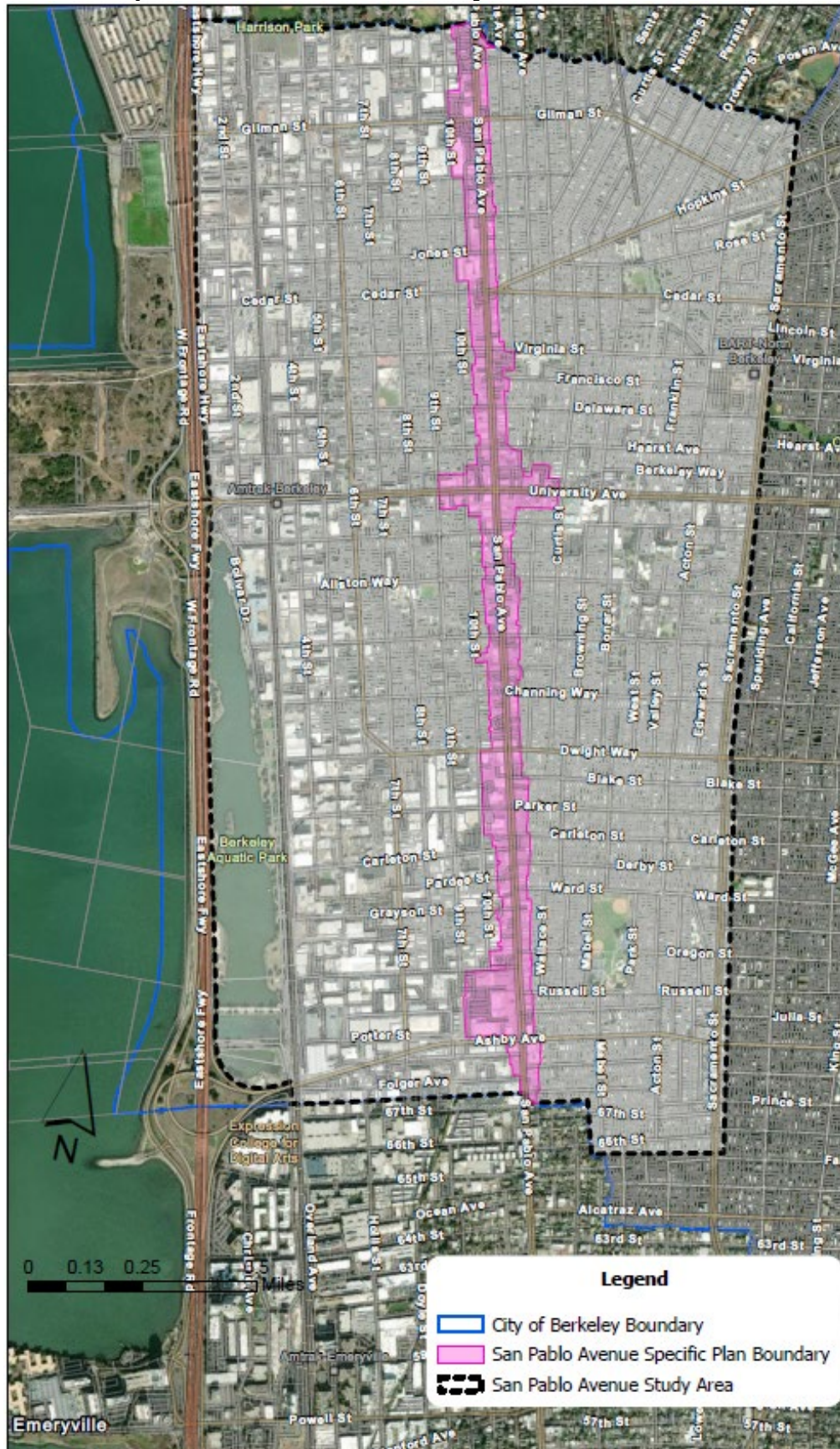
Staff have conducted an analysis of the PDA in order to determine the proposed San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Area and the Study Area (see Figure 1). The existing PDA boundary primarily focuses on parcels fronting San Pablo Avenue and is intended for regional planning and funding related efforts. The proposed Specific Plan Area boundary is more refined on a parcel-by-parcel basis based on staff analysis of existing uses, lot and parcel configurations, and existing conditions.

¹ACTC San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project, <https://www.alamedactc.org/programs-projects/multimodal-arterial-roads/sanpabloave>

²AC Transit Rapid Corridor Project, <https://www.actransit.org/rapid-corridors/san-pablo-avenue>

Further, to assess trends and status of existing plans and policies, the SPA SP team identified a Study Area broader in geographic scope than the Specific Plan Area. The proposed Study Area is generally defined by a half mile buffer from San Pablo Avenue and reflects boundaries defined by census tracts and census blocks.

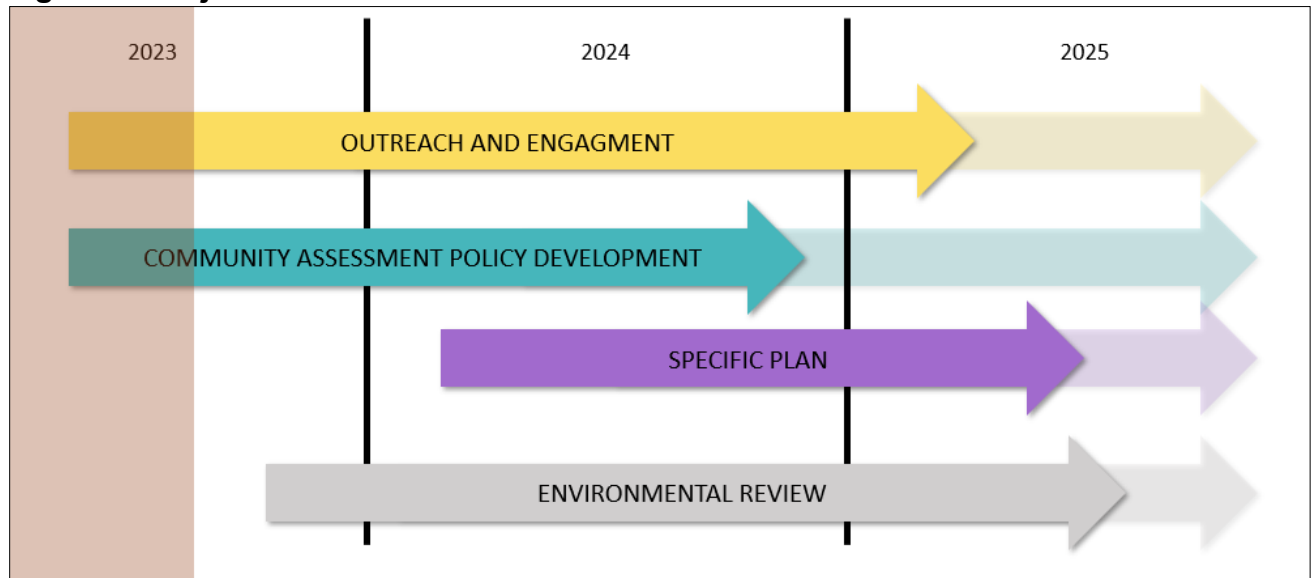
Figure 1. San Pablo Specific Plan Area and Study Area



PROJECT TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS

The overall timeline of the planning process is approximately two years (see Figure 2). Staff anticipate completion of the draft specific plan and addendum to the Housing Element EIR by early 2025, which will then be advanced to the Planning Commission for a recommendation by the middle of 2025 and to the City Council for review and adoption by the end of 2025.

Figure 2. Project Timeline



Currently, the project team is collecting and analyzing information for the existing conditions assessment related to:

- **Land use conditions and existing policies.** Existing and proposed land uses and development standards.
- **Public Infrastructure and Transportation.** Assessment of existing public infrastructure and utilities and a summary of ongoing transportation projects.
- **Housing.** Current housing affordability levels and projections of likely number of affordable housing units, consideration of Housing Element sites inventory.
- **Jobs and economic programs.** Economic indicators related to employment, economic development market trends, retail or other service demands.
- **Resilience and climate adaptation.** Information about environmental quality through the review of Berkeley's climate action plans and assessment of parks and recreation spaces in the study area.
- **Equity.** Current and past Census and American Community Survey (ACS) data to analyze trends related to residential displacement and other indicators of racial and social equity.

The data will be used to establish baseline conditions and provide context for policy recommendations during planned public outreach and engagement events.

Stakeholder interviews and small group meetings have begun in August. The project team is currently finalizing the timing and materials for a public workshop, community survey and pop-up information event. Community engagement will continue through the various phases of the project, including community asset analysis, policy development, public draft plan review, and final plan adoption. More detailed information about specific meeting dates and other project updates will be announced via email, printed flyers and postcards and on the project website, as location and agendas are confirmed. The anticipated date for the launch of the project website is September 13; the website will be regularly updated about information with meeting dates, times, and public documents. Interested parties may subscribe to email notifications about the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan here:

https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CABERKE/subscriber/new?topic_id=CABERKE_194

Staff will continue to update the City Council on the progress of the SPA SP effort through additional informational memos, work session meetings, and other communications. Staff will request that City Council schedule an initial work session on this project in fall 2024 to review findings from existing conditions analysis and initial community outreach efforts.

If you have any questions about this project, please reach out to Jordan Klein, Director of Planning & Development, at (510) 774-1337 or jklein@berkeleyca.gov.

cc: LaTanya Bellow, Deputy City Manager
Anne Cardwell, Deputy City Manager
Farimah Brown, City Attorney
Jenny Wong, City Auditor
Mark Numainville, City Clerk
Matthai Chakko, Assistant to the City Manager
Jordan Klein, Director of Planning & Development