CHAPTER 6: PEDESTRIANS

The pedestrian environment is West Berkeley provides adequate sidewalks and crosswalks to channel pedestrian movements but areas of improvement are still evident. With the exception of some industrial parcels in the northern portion of West Berkeley, sidewalks are provided throughout the study area. In particular, wider sidewalks are provided within the 4th Street Shopping District and along portions of San Pablo Ave. Additionally, amenities such as planter strips and on-street parking function as buffers between pedestrians and vehicular traffic. High levels of pedestrian traffic are observed to concentrate along streets and corridors defined by a mix of uses, including retail, commercial, and residential uses.

Additionally, a key generator of pedestrian traffic in the study area is linked to the provision of transit service. In many respects, the pedestrian realm along San Pablo Ave. is fed largely by users of the transit service which runs along corridor. The majority of transit users begin or end their trips as pedestrians and continue to be a part of the pedestrian environment once they leave the transit network.

Ultimately, strategies will need to comprehensively address several key issues, including: high pedestrian volumes, high levels of crossing pedestrian traffic, and pedestrian activity at busy arterials. As the data shows, it is particularly important to provide the appropriate pedestrian amenities where they are needed so as to reduce safety issues and promote the creation and maintenance of vibrant destinations where different types of users can come together to equally share in a common space.

6.1 PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

Citywide, Berkeley is known as a walkable community and the same holds true for the West Berkeley study area. The grid system street network developed during the times when streetcars traveled on San Pablo and University Avenues in the western portion of the City resulted in shorter, walkable city blocks for pedestrians. The flat topography of West Berkeley is also a benefit to pedestrians. Specific elements that compose the pedestrian network in West Berkeley include sidewalks, crosswalks, curb ramps and pedestrian overpasses/bridges. This section will highlight the existing pedestrian network for West Berkeley and identify its shortcomings.

Citywide, Berkeley has approximately 400 miles of sidewalks (counting both sides of the street) covering over 90% of the potential pedestrian network\(^1\). One of the two areas of the City noted by the Pedestrian Plan to be lacking a completed sidewalk network is within the West Berkeley study area. This area includes sections of northwest Berkeley’s industrial area, north of Cedar Ave., between Interstate 80/580 and San Pablo Ave. Figure 6-1 shows the exact locations of these missing segments marked in red.

\(^{1}\) Potential Pedestrian Network is defined as the area on both side of any street within Berkeley excluding freeways
Sidewalks in the study area are primarily six feet wide. Sidewalks averaging closer to eight feet can be found in various parts of West Berkeley including the 4th St. Shopping District and along portions of San Pablo Ave. Most sidewalks also include planter strips between the roadway and sidewalk which function as a buffer between pedestrians and vehicular traffic. Many streets in the study area, including San Pablo Ave. and University Ave., allow on-street parking which also functions as a buffer.

Crosswalks create the interface between the sidewalk and roadway networks and provide the key linkages for pedestrians across traffic streams. A number of crossing designations exist in West Berkeley including variations in roadway striping patterns and colors, type of crossing signals, and location of crosswalk (mid-block vs. intersection). This exposed area of interaction between vehicles, bikes and pedestrians often results in safety concerns.

Pedestrian travel at most signalized intersections is controlled by pedestrian signals mounted below the traffic signals. In West Berkeley, the only signalized intersections that do not have pedestrian signals are at the intersections of 4th St./Gilman St. and 4th St./Cedar St. Newer pedestrian signal heads provide countdown signals to notify those crossing or contemplating to cross how much time they have before the traffic signal changes (Figure 6-2). More sophisticated signals also sound a noise to indicate the walking phase for vision-impaired pedestrians.

![Figure 6-2: Pedestrian Countdown Signal](image)

The minimum crossing time given to the pedestrian during the traffic signal phase is based on the crossing distance. Typically 4 mph is the walking speed used to calculate this time. Often, more time is needed to accommodate slower walkers, particularly children and the elderly. The City has four locations in West Berkeley where timings could be increased to meet the 4 mph standard:
- 6th St. and Gilman St.
- 6th St. and Hearst St.
- 6th St. and University Ave.
- 9th St. and University Ave.

Curb ramps are another component of the pedestrian network that helps improve accessibility, especially for the ADA wheelchair population and baby strollers. These ramps provide a transition between the roadway and sidewalk networks. Ramps are currently located at nearly all crosswalk locations in West Berkeley. Newer installations of curb ramps include truncated domes which provide a tactile surface to warn visually impaired pedestrians.
impaired pedestrians when they are leaving the sidewalk and entering the roadway. Currently, only 7% of curbs Citywide have these domes. Areas of West Berkeley which include domes include San Pablo Ave., University Ave., and Gilman St. with new additions to come along 4th St. at the Amtrak Station and Addison St.

6.2 SITE RECONNAISSANCE

Although a large proportion of travel in West Berkeley uses automobiles and transit, bicycling and walking are important components of the transportation network. Frequently, the beginning or ending to an auto or transit trip includes one of these non-motorized modes. Creating and maintaining an environment where these modes can travel safely and conveniently is a key element toward achieving the goals and objectives of the City’s General Plan.

The City also promotes pedestrian activity through its various pedestrian pathways, green open areas, and sidewalks found throughout West Berkeley. Walkable environments are those that make pedestrian activity possible through the provision of physical infrastructure (e.g. sidewalks, pathways, short blocks, etc) and the location of goods and services within a reasonable walking distance. These elements work together to create synergetic relationships that both reinforce one another and promote greater transportation options.

6.3 PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY

An assessment of 25 intersections was also completed for pedestrians to determine where heavy pedestrian activity occurs (Figure 6-3). Intersections were selected with a process similar to the selection of bicycle intersections and based on the network, safety, and anticipated volumes.

AM and PM peak weekday period counts were taken. Table 6-1 shows the top five locations for pedestrian activity in West Berkeley.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location/Intersection</th>
<th>Total Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Ave./ San Pablo Ave.</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearst Ave. / 4th St.</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware St. / San Pablo Ave.</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilman St. / San Pablo Ave.</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwight Way / San Pablo Ave.</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PM PEAK HR PEDESTRIAN VOLUMES

- 10
- 25
- 50
- 75
- 100

STUDY INTERSECTION - NO PED COUNTS TAKEN

WEST BERKELEY CIRCULATION MASTER PLAN

Figure 6-3

PM PEAK HOUR PEDESTRIAN VOLUMES
In general, the highest pedestrian volumes were observed in the vicinity of San Pablo Ave. The high levels of pedestrian activity observed at these locations tend to reflect the high pedestrian traffic associated with major urban thoroughfares (e.g. University Ave. and San Pablo Ave.) that are defined by a mix of residential and commercial uses, and the available capacity to carry large volumes of both vehicular and foot traffic.

It should be noted that three of the top five intersections identified as high pedestrian traffic centers are also major transit stops, they include the intersections of: University Ave. and San Pablo Ave., Gilman St. and San Pablo Ave., and Dwight Way and San Pablo Ave. These stops are all located on San Pablo Ave. which is served by AC Transit’s Rapid Bus Service Route 72R. The contribution of transit to pedestrian activity can be evidenced by the volumes of transit riders who exit the bus and cross at nearby intersections. As such, transit and pedestrian trips are inherently related as the majority of transit trips begin and end as walking trips. In fact, nationwide over 7.2 percent of all trips are walking trips.2

Pedestrian traffic is undoubtedly a reflection of the character (e.g. heavy transit use) and the amenities (e.g. retail opportunities) provided on these select streets. The International Marketplace located along San Pablo Ave. is particularly vibrant and attractive to pedestrian activity as reflected in its mixed-use with a high concentration of restaurants, specialty shops, and various residential densities all within a two to three block radius to create a truly walkable business district. Similarly, University Ave., the main gateway to Downtown and the University of California, Berkeley also presents various retail opportunities, residential densities, and key anchors of activity at each end that help reinforce pedestrian activity along the corridor.

Fourth Street offers a unique example of concentrated pedestrian activity in a primarily low volume residential setting. This activity is due to the area’s recent transformation from a quiet industrial neighborhood into a thriving commercial center. The street itself is lined with a number of small shops interspersed with a key anchor chain stores and quaint restaurants. These major trip generating uses regularly draw high levels of pedestrian activity composed of both locals and tourists who enjoy strolling along 4th Street’s retail corridor. Alternatively, streets like Ashby Ave. who lack a “sense of place”, have no key destinations, and are defined by large blocks and manufacturing/industrial land uses that are not appealing to pedestrians.

Figure 6-4: 4th Street Streetscape

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