



AGENDA

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

March 31, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

Staff Liaison
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VIA TELECONFERENCE
<https://elcerrito.webex.com/elcerrito/j.php?MTID=m711c27521133184012981c5e793611e9>

Event ID: 187 894 6258
Event Password: Planning

Or Join by Phone: 1-408-418-9388
Access code: 187 894 6258

7:00 p.m. CONVENE SPECIAL MEETING

1. **ROLL CALL – Planning Commission:** Chair Leslie Mendez; Members Brendan Bloom, Greg Crump, Erin Gillett, Daniel Hamilton, Linda Klein and Joy Navarrete
Design Review Board: Chair Ben Chuaqui; Vice-Chair Wenlin Li; Members Andrea Lucas, Gyan Singh and John Thompson
2. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**
Remarks are typically limited to three minutes per person, and may be on anything within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body. Remarks on non-agenda items will be heard first, remarks on agenda items will be heard at the time the item is discussed.
3. **COMMISSIONER COMMUNICATION/CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE**
This time on the agenda is reserved for Commissioners to disclose communications from individuals regarding specific agenda items or to state a potential conflict of interest in relation to a specific agenda item
4. **STUDY SESSION – SAN PABLO AVENUE SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATES**
Applicant: City of El Cerrito
Location: San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan area
Zoning: Transit-Oriented Higher-Intensity Mixed Use (TOHIMU), Transit-Oriented Mid-Intensity Mixed Use (TOMIMU), and Theater District (TD).
General Plan: Transit-Oriented Higher-Intensity Mixed Use (TOHIMU), Transit-Oriented Mid-Intensity Mixed Use (TOMIMU), and Theater District (TD).
Request: Planning Commission and Design Review Board study session on updates to the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan.
5. **STAFF COMMUNICATIONS**
Informational reports on matters of general interest, presented by City staff.
6. **ADJOURNMENT**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact Sean Moss at (510) 215-4330. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable

the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title I).

Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the members regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection.



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PLANNING COMMISSION/DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
STUDY SESSION STAFF REPORT
March 31, 2021

SAN PABLO AVENUE SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE

DETAILS

Applicant: City of El Cerrito

Location: San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Area

Zoning: Transit-Oriented Mid-Intensity Mixed Use (TOMIMU), Transit-Oriented Higher-Intensity Mixed Use (TOHIMU), and Theater District (TD)

General Plan: Transit-Oriented Mid-Intensity Mixed Use (TOMIMU), Transit-Oriented Higher-Intensity Mixed Use (TOHIMU), and Theater District (TD)

Request: A study session on updates to the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan was adopted by the El Cerrito City Council in 2014. The Plan has been successful in promoting and attracting development and investment in the San Pablo Avenue Corridor.

The Environmental Impact Report for the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan evaluated a development capacity of 1,706 new residential units and 243,110 square feet of net new commercial space. Taking into account entitled projects and submitted applications, the development capacity for residential units has nearly been met.

The Planning Commission and Design Review Board reviewed the scope of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan update in January 2019. The Commission and Board provided feedback which was provided to the City Council in March 2019. The Council directed staff to proceed with the Specific Plan update as identified in the project scope. Since that time, staff has continued to evaluate and draft proposed new standards to address the issues identified in the project scope. These proposals are presented in this report.

Staff is now seeking further input from the public, the Planning Commission, and the Design Review Board on these topics. This feedback will enable staff and the City's consultant (MIG) to finalize the Project description for the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) and to commence the required environmental analysis.

Staff anticipates that a public draft of the Specific Plan update and the SEIR will be available in Fall 2021. After a 45-day comment period, comments will be incorporated into the update and SEIR and they will return to the Planning Commission for consideration of a recommendation to the City Council in December 2021. The update and SEIR will be considered by the City Council in January 2022.

Background

The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan process first began in 2007. The Plan began as a joint effort between the cities of El Cerrito and Richmond to create a shared vision and more standardized development standards along the stretch of the San Pablo Avenue corridor that is shared by both cities. The earliest efforts to create a San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan resulted in a draft document which was reviewed by the El Cerrito City Council in 2011. The El Cerrito City Council did not adopt the initial Plan and issued a series of recommendations, including increasing building heights and densities, providing more flexible parking standards and a more flexible approach to mixed-use development, including allowing ground-floor residential uses. In response to these comments, the Specific Plan process was restarted in 2013. At this time, the Plan was substantially overhauled and revised, a Complete Streets Plan was added, and the scope of the environmental review was expanded to include an Environmental Impact Report. The revised plan was adopted by the El Cerrito City Council on October 7, 2014. The Plan has not been amended since its adoption.

As required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared for the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan. The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan EIR evaluated a development capacity 1,706 new residential units and 243,112 of net new square feet of commercial space within the Plan area by 2040. The EIR also noted that, “when and if these numbers are reached, regardless of the year they are reached, new environmental analysis, documentation, and determination pursuant to CEQA would need to be conducted.”

To maintain both a short-term and long-term planning perspective for the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, the development capacity for the EIR included several projects in the plan area which were either anticipated, in the pipeline, or approved. Three projects were included in the City of El Cerrito for which an EIR had been certified and/or entitlements approved prior to the adoption of the Plan, but the projects had not yet submitted for building permits. It was noted in the Specific Plan EIR that, “each project proposal will need to undergo the City review process, including reviews related to the completeness of the project application, conformance with the Specific Plan, applicability of the Specific Plan EIR and the possible need for additional CEQA work or technical studies, and the City decision-making process, including public hearings.” Subsequently to the adoption of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan and EIR, project applications were submitted for 18 new development projects. Each project has been or is being evaluated for compliance with the Plan, and the appropriate environmental documentation has been or is being prepared to ensure compliance with the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan EIR.

The table below shows an accounting of the units and commercial square footage represented by projects that have been entitled or submitted and provides the remaining development capacity allowed under the current EIR.

Project	Residential Units	Commercial S.F.
11795 San Pablo Ave (Wall Ave Apartments)	130	3,695
11060 San Pablo Ave (Griffin)	183	-
10963 San Pablo Ave (Cerrito Vista)	50	3,000
6501 Fairmount	45	1,841
6111, 6115 Potrero Ave / 11335 San Pablo Ave	63	5,554

10919 San Pablo Ave	90	2,998
921 Kearney Street	59	-
11965 San Pablo Ave (Polaris)	144	-
11600-11690 San Pablo Ave (Mayfair)	230	8,893
11645 San Pablo Ave (Hampton Inn)	-	80,060
10810 San Pablo Ave (Village at Town Center)	40	-
10300 San Pablo Ave (Credence)	32	-
10290 San Pablo Ave	55	-
10192 San Pablo Ave	26	-
10135 San Pablo Ave	72	4,435
10167 San Pablo Ave (Avenue Lofts)	62	-
10534 San Pablo Ave (Cinque Terre)	5	813
5620 Central Ave (Central Ave Housing - City of Richmond)*	46	-
10848-10860 San Pablo Ave (Hana Gardens)	63	2,300
Southeastern Corner of El Cerrito Plaza (Metro 510)	128	-
6431-6495 Portola Dr (Ohlone Gardens)	57	4,650
Total	1,580	118,239
Specific Plan EIR Development Capacity	1,706	243,110
Remaining Development Capacity	126	124,871

* This Richmond project was initially entitled as 172 units but has been reduced to 46 townhomes. Staff doesn't know the current status of the project, but its eventual numbers will impact the remaining development capacity.

- Submitted applications
- Entitled projects
- Entitled and under construction or completed

As demonstrated by the table, the development capacity analyzed in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan EIR has been nearly reached. In order to facilitate further development in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan area, and continue to pursue the goals of the Plan, subsequent environmental analysis is required.

Staff have commenced work on a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report to analyze further development capacity within the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan area. As part of this effort, staff is seeking to finalize the project description for the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for the update and is seeking the Planning Commission's and Design Review Board's input on elements of the update which have been further developed since the Planning Commission and Design Review Board last discussed the update in 2019. A summary of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan process up to this point is contained below and available at www.el-cerrito.org/SPASP.

The joint body of the Planning Commission and Design Review Board last discussed the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan update on January 16, 2019. At this meeting the joint body reviewed the topic areas that staff had identified for consideration in the update based on past experience and feedback from the public, developers, architects, and other public agencies. The joint body provided feedback on the proposed scope. The packet for this meeting is available at: <http://www.el-cerrito.org/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/4707>

The City Council considered this scope which was modified based on feedback from the Planning Commission and Design Review Board on February 5, 2019. The Council directed staff to proceed with the proposed scope. The packet for this meeting is available at: <http://www.elcerrito.org/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/4720>

After these Joint Planning Commission and Design Review Board and City Council meetings, City staff conducted additional public outreach on the topic areas that had been reviewed by the Planning Commission, Design Review Board, and City Council. A community workshop was held on March 21, 2019, and the Community Development Director gave a presentation about the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan and Specific Plan update at the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce luncheon on May 21, 2019. The City hosted a community open house on July 27, 2019. BART also participated in this open house to introduce the public to their process for transit-oriented development (TOD) at the El Cerrito Plaza BART station. On July 29, 2019, the City hosted a public meeting which sought feedback from the public and members of the City Boards and Commissions.

As City Hall was closed to the public in March 2020 and many programs and services took modified forms, the implementation of the Specific Plan update was delayed. City staff began proceeding with the update in the third quarter of 2020 and in November 2020, the City issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to initiate the preparation of the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report. A public meeting was held on December 3, 2020 via teleconference to receive comments regarding the scope of analysis for the SEIR for the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan update.

In the first quarter of 2021, City staff from various departments have discussed topics related to the defined scope of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan update, and have worked with the City's consultant, MIG, to develop new and modified policies and standards that address the topic areas included in the project scope. The purpose of this special Joint meeting is to receive further feedback from the Planning Commission, Design Review Board and the public on specific topic areas. This feedback will help staff and MIG finalize the project description for the SEIR which is needed in order to continue the analysis required for the SEIR.

City staff may schedule one additional joint study session to discuss additional topics on the scope for the update, if necessary. Staff anticipates that a draft of the updated Specific Plan and the SEIR will be available for public review in Fall 2021. The Specific Plan Update and SEIR would then return to the Planning Commission for a recommendation to the City Council in December 2021.

In 2019, the State Legislature passed Senate Bill 330. SB 330 limits the ability of Cities to downzone properties to a less intensive land use than what was in place on January 1, 2018. The bill states:

For purposes of this subparagraph, "less intensive use" includes, but is not limited to, reductions to height, density, or floor area ratio, new or increased open space or lot size requirements, or new or increased setback requirements, minimum frontage requirements, or maximum lot coverage limitations, or anything that would lessen the intensity of housing.

This legislation limits the changes to development standards that can be included in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan update. Staff notes that the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan does not contain maximum density standards. Therefore, it is possible to modify certain standards or impose some new standards, that may have an effect on future projects, but that would not necessarily reduce the number of units which could be built on a development site. In some instances, staff are proposing to

modify development standards in such a way that could limit building mass in some situations but allow for additional mass in other situations, thereby having a roughly neutral affect across a particular zoning district. As City staff and the City's consultant continue to work together to develop the update, City staff continues to discuss this issue with the City Attorney to ensure that any new standards are consistent with SB 330.

Areas of Discussion

As stated above, the feedback from this meeting will be used to finalize the project description for the SEIR and to draft the Specific Plan update. Staff is seeking feedback from the Planning Commission and Design Review Board to ensure that the proposals that are detailed below adequately address the concerns of the Commission, Board, and the public.

Commercial Land Uses – Street Types

Prior to the adoption of the Plan, commercial uses were required on the ground floor of all development along San Pablo Avenue, although very little commercial development had occurred and economic indicators were poor. Several economic studies commissioned by the City recommended a more strategic approach to the ground floor commercial requirement, e.g. focusing commercial requirements in “nodes” to create more pedestrian-oriented activity and to support transit-oriented development. Furthermore, studies confirmed that the city's path to economic development was to attract residential development. Currently, commercial uses are required for 50% of the ground floor frontage of projects located only on the San Pablo Avenue Commercial and Major Commercial street types. This requirement is contained in Section 2.04.02.01 as a requirement that a minimum of 50% of the frontage on these street types utilize the ‘Shop Front’ frontage type. This is both to activate San Pablo Avenue and provide new commercial/retail opportunities. These commercial street types are located near the two BART stations, at the Stockton Avenue and Moeser Lane commercial nodes and along the portions of Fairmount Avenue, Stockton Avenue, and Hill Street that are within the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan area. Although only currently *required* in those specific locations, commercial ground floor uses are allowed throughout the Plan area and have been provided in several proposed and approved applications where not required.

As the implementation of the Plan proceeds, and nearby new residents create additional pedestrian foot traffic in the Plan area, it is anticipated that new commercial/retail destinations will become increasingly supported. The current street type designation captures many commercial spaces which will not likely turnover in the foreseeable future. In order to have a variety of commercial spaces available, and due to the anticipated continued success of the Plan, staff evaluated and is recommending expanding the San Pablo Avenue Commercial Street type where commercial ground floor requirements apply.

Staff is proposing to expand the San Pablo Avenue Commercial and Major Commercial Street types in specific areas c to expand the nodes and create opportunities for new businesses to locate. The Major Commercial street type would be added to the length of Potrero Avenue in the Specific Plan area, which would preserve an existing commercial node, and to Moeser Lane between San Pablo Avenue and Kearney Street, which would maintain a commercial presence if large shopping center parcels along Moeser Lane were to redevelop. The San Pablo Avenue Commercial Street designation would be extended north between Central Avenue and Lincoln Avenue in the Downtown node. Maintaining a walkable commercial area in close proximity to the Theater District is a goal of the City. The San Pablo Avenue Commercial Street type would also be extended north from Cutting Boulevard to Wall Street. This area includes three projects (Hampton Inn, Mayfair, and Wall Ave Apartments) that have already

incorporated ground floor commercial. These two expansions of the San Pablo Avenue Commercial street type represent areas within the existing nodes (generally within ¼ mile of the BART stations) where there is opportunity for new development.

Commercial Land Uses – Commercial Priority Overlay Zone

The retail sector is currently in a period of large-scale change. Various retail tenants have differing needs with regard to square footage, parking, amenities, and other attributes. City staff continue to evaluate ways to ensure that the policies of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan allow for the needs of a wide range of quality retail tenants in the current environment and are sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of retail tenants in the future. Staff may return to the Planning Commission for more feedback on this topic as ideas continue to be evaluated.

Daylight Plane and Shadow Standards

The shadow and daylight plane standards contained in Section 2.05.02.02.03 have proved difficult to administer. As a result of confusion among these standards, the Zoning Administrator issued an interpretation on May 1, 2018.

In addition, staff has heard input from members of the public regarding the massing and appropriate scale of development on Neighborhood Streets. Adjusting the shadow and/or daylight plane standards to be more sensitive to the context of Neighborhood Streets could address some of these concerns.

City staff and the City's consultant have spent much time evaluating the existing daylight plane and shadow standards and developing new standards that address the issues discussed above. As mentioned above SB 330 poses an additional layer of complexity on the imposition of new daylight plane and shadow standards.

Based on staff's experience with the projects that have been entitled to date, several shadow standards are functioning as designed and are achieving the desired result. Staff is not proposing any changes to the shadow standards along the San Pablo Avenue Commercial or Community street types, the Major Commercial street type or the Ohlone Greenway.

The following standards have been the focus of analysis with regard to the Specific Plan update:

1. Section 2.05.02.02.05 requires that the shadows cast by new buildings not cross the curb line on the opposite side of the street at 1:30 p.m. on the Winter Solstice for streets to the east, and 10:00 a.m. or 4:00 p.m. on the Winter Solstice for streets to the north.
2. Section 2.05.02.02.06 (as implemented by the Zoning Administrator interpretation) requires a 45-degree daylight plane extending from a height of 35 feet anywhere a new building abuts a residential zoning district.
3. Section 2.05.02.02.02.03 required that new buildings not cast a shadow greater than 14 feet deep onto *existing residential land uses* to the east at 1:30 p.m. on the Winter Solstice.

Further discussion of each of these standards is contained below:

1. Based on City staff's initial experience with the 921 Kearney Street project, staff felt that reevaluating the shadow standards along neighborhood streets was warranted. Prior to the project being approved, staff confirmed that the shadow had been incorrectly calculated for this

project. The resulting shadow analysis required the fourth and fifth floors to be setback further from the street. This change in building massing was consistent with the intent of these standards and confirmed that this shadow standard is effective on Neighborhood Streets. Staff is not proposing any changes to this standard.

2. Given that this standard applies in limited locations (abutting residential zoning districts only) it does not address all of the concerns detailed above. Notably, it does not limit massing of new buildings adjacent to existing residential uses which are not in residential zoning districts. The shadow standard listed as #3 above applies to existing residential uses. However, it only applies to properties to the east of a new building. Given the limitations of these two standards, staff is proposing to modify the daylight plan standards so that they apply universally wherever there is an adjacency to an existing residential land use. The proposed daylight plane would extend at 45-degrees from a height of 25 feet on any side adjacent to an existing residential use.
3. In order to make the change to the daylight plan standard consistent with SB 330's prohibition of downzoning, staff is proposing to eliminate the shadow standard adjacent to existing residential land uses to the east. The proposed daylight plane standard would apply more universally the existing shadow standard, but generally would be less restrictive than the existing shadow standard, staff intends to perform analysis that shows that replacing the existing shadow standard with a revised daylight plane standard that applies more universally, will have a neutral effect on massing throughout the district.

Tier IV Process

The Planning Commission has expressed that the Commission would like a clearer process to both qualitatively and quantitatively evaluate public benefits. Staff has examined refinements to this process in order to provide the Commission with the tools necessary to evaluate public benefits and also to provide staff and applicants with a clearer direction regarding the adequacy of public benefits. As part of the application process for a Tier IV Design Review application, staff is proposing to require applicants to submit a questionnaire that will aid in the Tier IV decision making process. Staff will further refine this questionnaire, and include a table summarizing the information in Tier IV staff reports for the Planning Commission. A sample of the questions to be included in the questionnaire is included as Attachment 1. This requirement will be included as a change in the submittal requirements for Tier IV applications and will not alter the text of the Specific Plan.

Land Use Regulations

Currently, single-family residential homes, and duplexes are permitted land uses in the Specific Plan area only if they are existing. New single-family homes and duplexes are prohibited. Multi-family residential is a permitted land use, but the definition of multi-family residential requires a minimum of 3 units. Some areas of the Specific Plan area contain smaller lots, and it can be difficult to accommodate 3 units on the property. Staff is proposing to modify the land use regulations to allow existing single-family homes to convert or be replaced with duplexes. This will allow additional housing production in the Specific Plan area in a way that is realistically achievable.

Additionally, staff continues to research alternative housing models, such as co-living. Staff is proposing that co-living (dormitory-style units with some shared facilities) be a permitted land use in the Specific Plan area and will include a definition of co-living in the Specific Plan update that ensures certain features are included as part of this land use. Staff will continue to research this topic and may return to the Planning Commission for additional feedback.

Staff also continues to research the topic of unit type mix within the Specific Plan area. Staff will continue to evaluate methods for ensuring that the mixture and types of new units built in the Specific Plan area meet the goals of the City's Housing Element. Staff may return to the Planning Commission for additional feedback on this topic.

Major Commercial Street Standards

Currently, the public-right-of-way and front setback standards are the same on both San Pablo Avenue Commercial and Major Commercial street types. Generally, the Major Commercial Streets (Fairmount Avenue, Stockton Avenue and Hill Street) have a different character and profile than San Pablo Avenue. Additionally, the City has made significant investments in Fairmount Avenue streetscape improvements which have improved the appearance and usability of Fairmount Avenue, but which are not consistent with the right-of-way standards for Major Commercial Streets. Further incremental improvements, such as widening of sidewalks, may be desirable, while preserving much of the investment that has been made on Fairmount Avenue, yet some parcel sizes are small, often shallow. While walkability is a priority on Major Commercial Streets, these streets are narrower than San Pablo Avenue. The need for amenities on Major Commercial Streets is also different than San Pablo Avenue.

Recognizing that Major Commercial Streets have notable differences from San Pablo Avenue, staff is proposing to reduce the amenity zone from a minimum of 6 feet to a minimum of 4-feet on Major Commercial Streets. In areas where existing trees are planted in the parking lane (i.e. Fairmount Avenue) the amenity zone would be reduced to a minimum of 2-feet to acknowledge this unique condition and the fact that the amenity zone is not needed for trees in this limited situation. Staff is also proposing that the pedestrian zone be reduced from a minimum of 8 feet to a minimum of 6 feet. A six foot pedestrian zone still provides adequate space for accessibility, and provides a comfortable pedestrian area on these commercial streets which are narrower than San Pablo Avenue.

Additionally, staff is proposing to modify the ground floor setback to allow setbacks greater than 10 feet adjacent to desirable active uses such as public open spaces and outdoor dining. This will allow more flexibility for projects that wish to include these amenities along the street frontage.

Neighborhood Street Standards

Standards on Neighborhood Streets is linked very closely with the shadow and daylight plane standards which apply in that context. Please refer to the Daylight Plane and Shadow Standards section above for a more detailed analysis of these standards.

In addition to daylight plane and shadow standards, staff also evaluated standards on Neighborhood Streets with regard to building frontage. Staff's intent in evaluating these standards was to achieve building frontages on Neighborhood Streets that are more consistent with the frontage character of existing development on these streets. Existing development on Neighborhood Streets is generally setback from the sidewalk, with yards and landscaping located in front of buildings. SB 330's prohibition on new setbacks poses some complication in crafting new requirements to achieve more consistent frontages. Staff is currently evaluating two possible methods for addressing this issue. These two proposals have the same goal, and staff will ultimately propose whichever change is determined to be more consistent with SB 330 in consultation with the City Attorney. One option is to require a greater activity zone on Neighborhood Streets. If determined to be consistent with SB 330, staff would propose an activity zone of 10 feet on Neighborhood streets. This would create an open zone of 10 feet which would be located behind the sidewalk (pedestrian zone). The other option is to require private open

space to be located in front of street-facing ground floor units. This option is discussed further in the Open Space Standards section below.

Green Infrastructure

In 2019, the City Council adopted the Green Infrastructure Plan. Green infrastructure refers to the treatment of stormwater within the public right-of-way. New projects are already required to implement stormwater treatment as part of Section C.3 of the Contra Costa County Clean Water Permit. This stormwater treatment typically occurs in biofiltration planters that are included on a project site. New State requirements for green infrastructure require the City to advance treatment of stormwater in the public right-of-way. References to the Green Infrastructure Plan will be incorporated into the Specific Plan, and applicants will be required to evaluate opportunities for green infrastructure, especially in areas identified as opportunities in the Green Infrastructure Plan.

Open Space Standards

Staff is proposing several changes to open space standards to clarify the standards and to ensure that the Specific Plan's intent is achieved with regard to open spaces.

Projects larger than 25,000 square feet are required to provide 25 square feet of public open space for every 1,000 square feet of building area. Several types of open space are noted in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan. Applicants are also permitted to apply to pay an in-lieu fee which assists the City in enhancing existing open spaces and creating new open spaces. However, in certain locations, staff is proposing that the payment of an in-lieu fee would not be permitted, and provision of public open space on site would be required. The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Open Space Plan (FBC Figure 89) denotes several "potential public open space" sites with asterisks. These sites are included on the map due to their identification as opportunities in the Urban Greening Plan. Staff is proposing clarifying the Open Space Plan to make clear that onsite open space is required in locations marked by an asterisk. Additionally, acknowledging that there will be increased open space demands in areas with more residents and more activity, staff is proposing that larger projects (larger than 1 acre or larger than 100 units) are required to provide onsite public open space.

Staff is also proposing additional standards regarding minimum dimensions of open spaces. Thus far, most common open spaces in entitled projects have been designed with adequate attention to light and air. However, one of the various proposals for the Polaris project would have created a seven-story deep courtyard on all sides. As a result, staff began looking at standards to ensure adequate light and air in common open spaces. Staff is proposing a new standard that will require that the dimension of any common open space be at least as much horizontally as the vertical dimension of the adjacent building wall. This will ensure a pleasant and usable scale for common open spaces.

Staff is proposing additional regulations that would affect the balance of private and common open spaces and the location of private open spaces. In acknowledgement of the context of El Cerrito and the value of private as well as common open space, staff is proposing that a minimum of 30% of the required private/common open space be individual private open spaces. This will ensure that some units in each project maintain this important family amenity.

As discussed above in the Neighborhood Street Standards section, as one option for addressing Neighborhood Street frontages, staff is proposing a requirement that ground floor private open space be included in front of street facing units on Neighborhood Streets. Since common/private open space is already required, this change would only affect where it is required to be located, and would create

building frontages that are more consistent with the existing conditions along most Neighborhood Streets.

Parking

Currently, the Plan allows parking within a range by right (1 to 1.5 space per unit in the TOMIMU district and 0.5 to 1 space per unit in the TOHIMU district). For projects with lower parking ratios, the Zoning Administrator requires a parking study and additional Transportation Demand Management TDM measures. City worked with Nelson/Nygaard to evaluate the most appropriate and effective TDM measures for the City's context and current phase of development. Staff will be recommending appropriate modifications to the Specific Plan to incorporate Nelson/Nygaard's recommendations with the goal of clarifying the parking reduction process and enhancing the effectiveness of TDM plans in the Specific Plan area.

Additionally, Nelson/Nygaard also produced a memo on curbside use and made recommendations regarding the management and prioritization of various curbside uses on different street types in the Specific Plan area. Staff continues to evaluate methods for including Nelson/Nygaard's recommendations into the Specific Plan.

Staff may return to the Planning Commission for additional feedback on these topics, as necessary.

Light and Air Exposure to Units

Light and air access into units is addressed by two standards described above:

1. The proposed minimum dimension of courtyards and common open spaces (no less than the height of the adjacent building wall—see Open Space Standards section).
2. The proposed daylight plane adjacent to existing residential uses (see Daylight Plane and Shadow Standards section above).

Next Steps

With the feedback from this meeting, City staff and MIG will finalize the project description for the SEIR and will commence the environmental analysis required for the SEIR. Staff anticipates that public drafts of the Specific Plan update and the SEIR will be available for review in Fall 2021. The release of the Draft SEIR will begin a required 45-day comment period on the SEIR. At the close of the comment period, all comments will be responded to and the responses will be incorporated into the Final SEIR. Staff expects the Final SEIR and Specific Plan update to be ready for Planning Commission review and recommendation in December 2021, before being considered by the City Council in January 2022.

Attachments

1. Sample questions for Tier IV Design Review questionnaire

DRAFT Tier IV Design Review Public Benefits Questionnaire

What amenities are located within 1/2 mile of the project site?

Parks?

Ohlone Greenway?

Transit stops?

Other public facilities?

Are there any unique characteristics of this project site?

Are there any planned capital projects in the vicinity of the project site?

Are there opportunities identified in the Urban Greening Plan within ¼ mile of the project site?

Are there opportunities identified in the Green Infrastructure Plan within ¼ mile of the project site?

Are there other opportunities to further goals of City policy documents through the public benefit for this project?

- Affordable Housing Strategy
- Active Transportation Plan
- San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Complete Streets Plan
- Climate Action Plan
- Ohlone Greenway Master Plan

Please describe the value of the public benefit qualitatively or quantitatively?

What is the value of the exception(s) to the development standard that is/are sought qualitatively or quantitatively?