

# ***San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) August 2021***

## **What is the *San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan*?**

The [\*San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan\*](#) (SPASP) was adopted in 2014 to advance the goals of the *City's 2015-2023 Housing Element* and economic development studies. It encourages new mixed-use (residential and commercial development along San Pablo Avenue and near the City's two BART stations to create much needed Bay Area housing near transit and to create more pedestrian traffic to stimulate new businesses. The SPASP identifies three Priority Development Areas (PDAs) that are distinguished by the following characteristics:

1. Downtown: An entertainment/theater and shopping district that serves as the southern gateway
2. Midtown: A civic, commercial and community-oriented zone
3. Uptown: A mixed use, hospitality and commercial area that serves as the northern gateway

To view the SPASP map, which includes developments under construction, approved and under review, visit [www.el-cerrito.org/majorprojects](http://www.el-cerrito.org/majorprojects).

## **What are the goals of *San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan*?**

To catalyze development of new residential, commercial and mixed-used development in order to create a multimodal corridor than functions, not just as a thoroughfare, but as a place that provides opportunities for living, working and community life. The Plan's key principles are to deepen a sense of place and community identity, attract and support private investment, enhance the public realm, promote the everyday use of transit, walking and biking and add housing and commercial space. There are six goals identified in the Plan to advance these efforts:

Goal A: Strengthen Sense of Place

Goal B: Ensure Return on Investment

Goal C: Encourage Practical and Market Friendly Development

Goal D: Enhance and Humanize Public Realm

Goal E: Catalyze Mode Shift

The Plan consists of two main elements: A **Form-Based Code** and a **Complete Streets Plan**.

## **What is a Form-Based Code?**

The FBC provides the regulations (standards and procedural approvals) and design guidance to streamline residential/commercial development to achieve high-quality new development and investment.

## **What is Complete Streets?**

The goal of Complete Streets is to design street improvements that will increase safety, accessibility and connectivity for pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles and transit users. Some of the proposed streetscape design improvements to Downtown, Midtown and Uptown include: separated bikeways, midblock crosswalks, new connections to the Ohlone Greenway, rain gardens and sidewalk improvements.

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## **How will these improvements be funded?**

Market rate development, including development that includes below-market rate inclusionary units, is financed by the private sector. Affordable Housing development is financed by a variety of public and private funding sources. Complete Streets improvements are funded by a combination of public (grant funding, City funding) and private sources (e.g. developer contributions, impact fees.)

## **What are developer contributions?**

Development is required to contribute to public benefits in a variety of ways, including:

- **Inclusionary Zoning:** All projects with 9 or more rental dwelling units, 10 or more for-sale dwelling units or any combination of 9 or more for-sale and rental dwelling units are required to provide between 10% - 12% of units at below market rate or the option of paying an in-lieu fee earmarked for future affordable housing development opportunities.
- **Art in Public Places:** All projects with development costs that exceed \$250,000 are required to contribute either public art on-site or an in-lieu fee. The required in-lieu fee is 1% of development costs, not to exceed \$150,000. The Arts and Culture Commission is tasked with determining program requirements and the use of public art funds.
- **Public and private open spaces:** The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan requires new residential and commercial projects to provide new private, common and public open space. Projects that are 25,000 square feet or greater are required to provide 25 square feet per 1,000 square feet of a building. Developers have the option of applying to pay a fee in-lieu of the open space.
- **West Contra Costa Unified School District:** New residential and commercial development is required to pay a Developer Fee to WCCUSD that is earmarked for the construction or reconstruction of school facilities to accommodate growth resulting from development. (As of 2019, the fee is \$5.05 per square foot for residential construction and \$0.61 per square foot for Commercial/Industrial/Exclusive Senior Housing.)
- **Other Fees:** New development pays other fees, including the Transportation Impact Fee, Stege Sanitary Capacity fee and Subregional Transportation Mitigation Program fee to help mitigate regional development related congestion.

## **How can I get involved?**

Members of the public are invited to attend public meetings where both the plan and individual projects are discussed. Visit the City's webpage [www.el-cerrito.org](http://www.el-cerrito.org) to sign up to receive agendas for the Design Review Board and Planning Commission meetings.

## **Questions or Comments?**

Please contact the Community Development Department @ [community@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:community@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us)

Melanie Mintz, *Community Development Director*: [mmintz@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:mmintz@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us) or 215-4339

Yvetteh Ortiz, *Public Works Director*: [yortiz@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:yortiz@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us) or 215-4345

Sean Moss, *Planning Manager*: [smoss@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:smoss@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us) or 215-4359

Aissia Ashoori, *Affordable Housing Analyst*: [aashoori@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:aashoori@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us) or 215-4361

