

SUB-AREA ISSUES AND REVITALIZATION CATALYSTS

Sub-Area 1

Area-Specific Trends and Issues

Sub-Area 1 in West Berkeley is the area which is bounded by the I-80 freeway to the west, Tenth Street to the east, Allston to the south, and Delaware to the north. Sub-Area 1 is also addressed by the West Berkeley Plan which establishes the appropriate mix and location of uses in this area.

Sub-Area 1 has a distinct physical pattern, as compared with other portions of the study area, in part due to its historic origins as a separate community – “Oceanview.” Parcelization varies dramatically, from very large parcels with a single industrial or commercial use per block to small parcels scaled for single-family homes. Also unique is the area’s block pattern which faces the short side of each block towards University Avenue, creating many street crossings at frequent intervals, whereas the remainder of the blocks along University Avenue are much longer. With industrial, commercial, and residential uses in close proximity, Sub-Area 1 is truly “mixed-use.”



The West University Node has a clustering of Indian merchants that is unique in the Bay Area.



Sub-Area 1 Illustrative

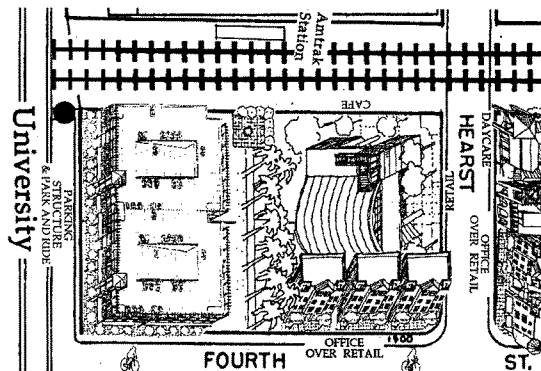
Light industrial uses in Sub-Area 1 are primarily concentrated around the railroad right-of-way, west of Fourth Street, and include a great diversity of manufacturing and distribution businesses, many of which are locally owned and operated. The West Berkeley Plan calls for maintaining and protecting this important economic and job base. Strategic Plan participants specifically called for limiting retail activities south of University Avenue, expanding opportunities for small-scale light industrial and live-work uses, and considering a night club or other entertainment use that would bolster nightlife in the area.

There are two major concentrations of commercial activity in Sub-Area 1: the Fourth Street area north of University Avenue and along the Avenue itself. Fourth Street, north of University, is a thriving mixed-use (primarily commercial and office) shopping street which is anchored to the south by Spenger's Restaurant and extends to the north with smaller shops, offices, and other eating and drinking establishments. This higher-end mix of restaurants, boutiques, and businesses draws from a regional clientele. The abundance of parking and proximity to the freeway make this area a prime shopping and entertainment destination. Along University Avenue between Seventh Street and San Pablo Avenue, there are a number of Indian merchants that serve a broad regional market, selling specialty food, jewelry, appliances, music, books, clothing, and other goods. This clustering of ethnic merchants is unique within the Bay Area and should be protected and nurtured. The western portion of

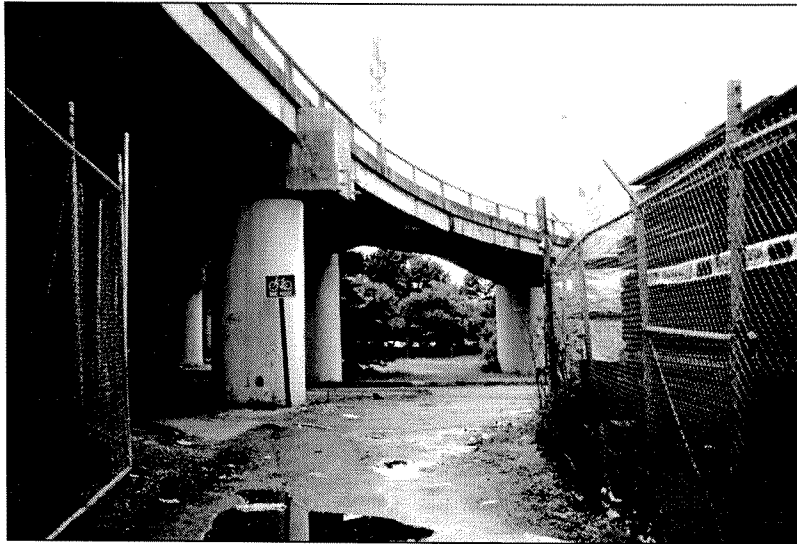
University Avenue also contains several additional businesses that cater to more than just the immediate neighborhood, including Amsterdam Art, gas stations, antique stores, electronic supplies, and others.

During the University Avenue Strategic Plan process, a key issue raised by the community regarding land use in Sub-Area 1 concerned the tension between the regional-serving nature of retail uses in the area west of San Pablo and the community's interest in creating opportunities for neighborhood-serving retail, continued light industrial, and artist uses. The West Berkeley Plan provides for continued light-industrial, service commercial, and retail activities within this area. The primary issue affecting the University Avenue Strategic Plan is how to accommodate the needs of regional serving users for increased parking while ensuring that the character of the surrounding neighborhood is protected.

Housing is located throughout Sub-Area 1. West of Sixth Street, residential and live-work uses are scattered among industrial uses, a reminder of the area's former residential past. East of Sixth Street, one block on either side of University Avenue, the fabric is defined by a fine-grained residential neighborhood with several churches and public buildings. While portions of these residential neighborhoods are quite stable, conditions vary on a block-by-block basis. A number of sites contain run-down and very dilapidated housing in great need of either renovation or replacement.



Spenger's parking lot has been suggested in the West Berkeley Redevelopment Plan as a prime location for a new parking structure, a future train station, a Shuttle stop, as well as retail and office space.



Existing bike access under Highway 80 overpass.

Traffic, transit service, bicycle access, and pedestrian safety are all factors affecting Sub-Area 1. By virtue of its access to I-80, University Avenue is one of the city's primary gateways. Yet there is no indication that one has entered Berkeley until at least San Pablo Avenue. Instead, this portion of the Avenue is dominated by speeding cars and heavily congested intersections. Signage at the I-80 ramps and the frontage road should be improved to help direct Fourth Street traffic off of University Avenue and alleviate congestion at 6th Street. Left turn arrows at 6th Street and at San Pablo would help further reduce the stack-up at these intersections. And, to make pedestrian crossings easier, special crosswalks and extended curbs should be provided at each intersection.

University Avenue west of Sixth Street becomes an overpass leading to the Interstate 80 freeway on-ramps and to the Berkeley waterfront.

This part of the Avenue acts as a significant physical and visual barrier for both pedestrians and autos. Access between the north and south sides of the street now only occurs at Second and Fourth Streets. These dark passageways are uninviting and unsafe for pedestrians.

Aquatic Park, an underutilized park and lake, is also located in Sub-Area 1. Due to the widening of I-80 now in progress, there is no longer any visual or acoustic barrier between the freeway and the park. The City is currently working with a consultant to develop an appropriate noise barrier which will be funded by CalTrans as part of the mitigation measures for the widening.

Sub-Area 1 Revitalization Catalysts

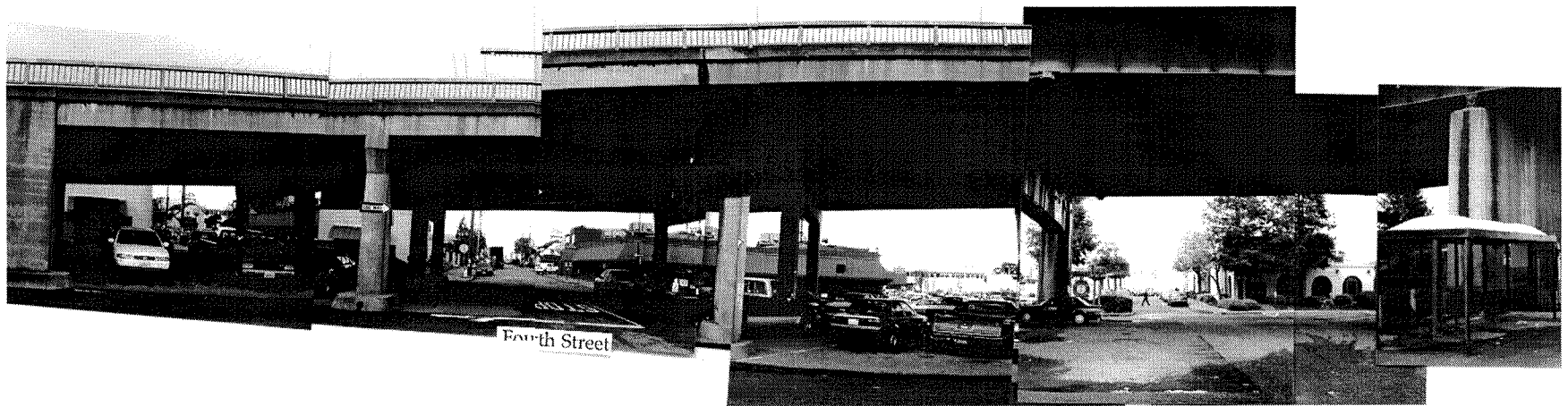
The following map illustrates recommended interventions (or revitalization catalysts) on opportunity sites within Sub-Area 1. For the purposes of this plan, "Opportunity Sites" represent locations where significant renovations or new construction may occur over the lifetime of the Strategic Plan. "Revitalization Catalysts" are projects that were either in process at this time this plan was being prepared, or should be considered as important first steps for implementation of the University Avenue Strategic Plan. In some cases a "catalyst" is not a physical building, but an economic development or social service program.

- Spenger's parking lot on Fourth Street between Hearst and University Avenue has been suggested in the West Berkeley Redevelopment Plan as a prime location for a new parking structure that would serve both local parking needs in and around Fourth Street and satellite parking for Downtown and U.C. Berkeley commuters. The facility could also include a future train station for a regional transit connection via Amtrak, a platform for a CalTrain-

type service, as well as a major stop and transfer point for the University Avenue Electric Shuttle. There is also sufficient land on this property to incorporate a mix of office, ground floor retail, entertainment, and outdoor plazas. Workshop participants expressed a concern that any new development on the site should fit with the scale of the surrounding area and not tower over the University Avenue overpass. To facilitate easy freeway access, the design should consider the feasibility of a special off-ramp connection into the parking structure. As an initial first step, a Master Plan should be prepared for this site.

- Work with property owners and merchants in the Fourth Street Node to ensure that the mix of uses remains economically healthy. Encourage additional infill.

- Consistent with the “West Berkeley Plan,” the City should limit expansion of specialty retail south of University and west of Fourth Street and encourage infill with new light industrial, small-scale office, and live-work uses. Consider amending the “West Berkeley Plan” to permit nighttime entertainment uses to locate in this area.
- Use the City of Berkeley Business Attraction Program to encourage new ethnically-oriented businesses to locate in the West University Node.
- Target a Residential Rehab Program to two locations within Sub-Area 1: the very dilapidated buildings at Ninth and Delaware and the blocks surrounding Columbus School.



University Avenue overpass looking south

- Upgrade and renovate the primary care facility at 6th and University (West Berkeley Family Practice).
- Signage at the I-80 ramps and the frontage road should be improved to help direct Fourth Street traffic off of University Avenue and alleviate congestion at 6th Street. Left turn arrows at 6th Street and at San Pablo would also help further reduce the stack-up at these intersections. And, to make pedestrian crossings easier, special crosswalks and extended curbs should be provided at each intersection.
- One of the most significant projects planned in Sub-Area 1 is a pedestrian and bicycle connection to the waterfront. Two alignments have been considered for this connection, an extension of Hearst Street or a linkage through Aquatic Park. This Strategic Plan recommends making the connection through Aquatic Park as

part of a broader effort to revitalize this urban open space. Related to this project is the noise barrier currently being designed along Highway 80 between the freeway and the park.

- Improve the physical connection under the University Avenue overpass at Fourth and Fifth Streets by installing appropriate lighting and painting the underside of the overpass a light color. Consider this area as a possible location for permitted graffiti or murals.
- Sub-Area 1 represents an important gateway to the city of Berkeley. A design competition should be held to define an appropriate gateway symbol. One suggestion is a grove of redwood or other distinctive trees within Aquatic Park at the University Avenue exit; another suggestion included banners and other gateway structures along the University Avenue Bridge and up to San Pablo Avenue, or a piece of public art in the University Avenue median.