

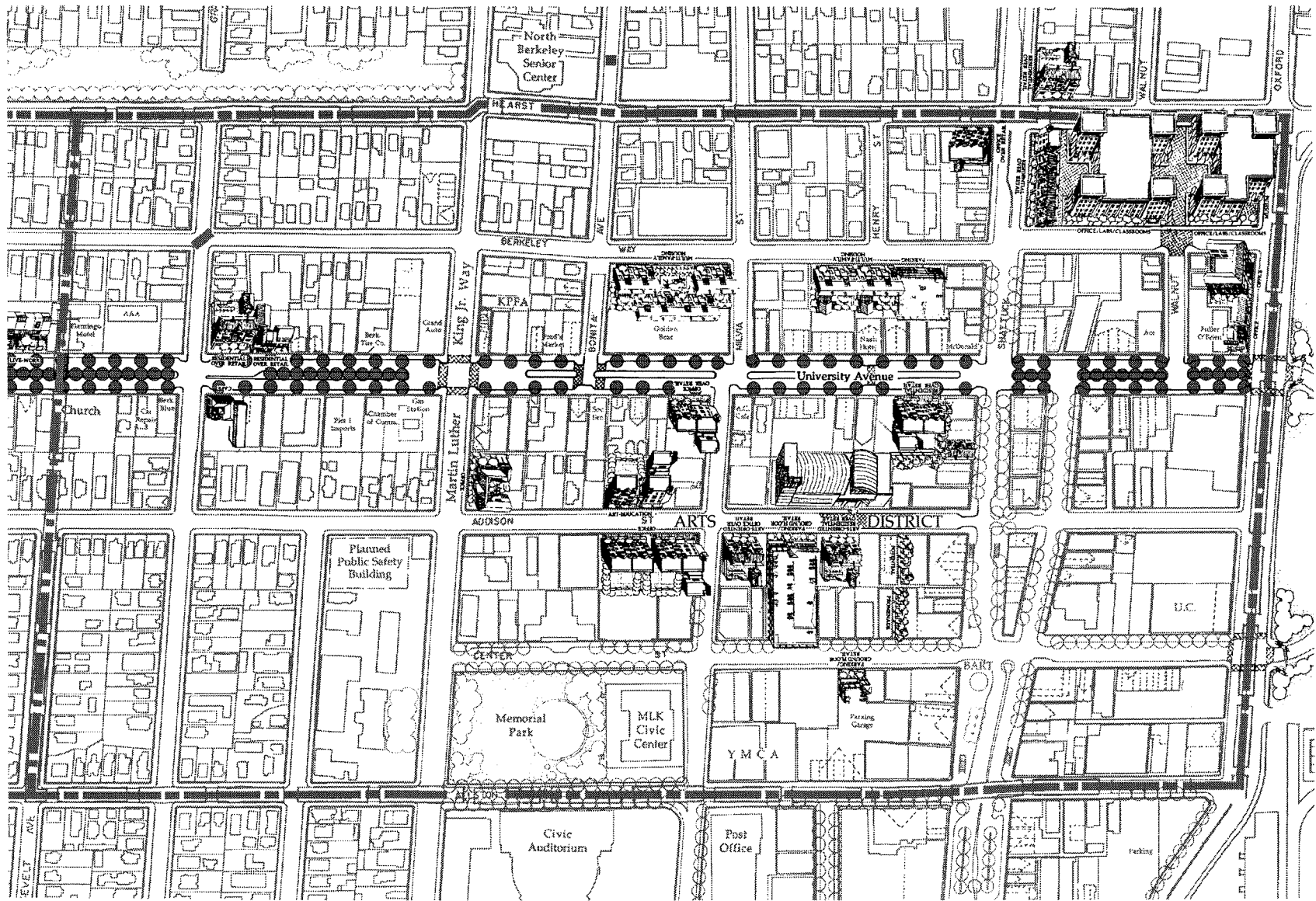
Sub-Area 4

Area-Specific Trends and Issues

Sub-Area 4 is the area along University Avenue which is bounded by Roosevelt Street to the west, the U.C. Campus to the east, Allston to the south, and Hearst to the north. In terms of long-range planning, part of Sub-Area 4 is also addressed by the Downtown Plan, the Downtown Public Improvements Plan, and the Downtown Berkeley Design Guidelines. The findings and proposals of these plans and guidelines are incorporated into this plan by reference, except as noted. The Civic Center Master Plan is being prepared simultaneously with this plan and the findings of each have been coordinated.

This area from the U.C. Campus to Martin Luther King Jr. Way, is a dense, fine-grained, mixed-use neighborhood which provides pedestrian-oriented commercial services. The area is anchored by the UC Theater and is supported by a number of restaurants, such as Au Coquelet and Plearn Thai Cuisine, among others; however, the many vacant storefronts in this block impair the viability of drawing new tenants to the area. These blocks also include a number of upper story office spaces, apartment buildings, and both operating and vacant Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels.





Sub-Area 4 Illustrative

Of the many three- to six-story brick buildings that line the street, some have been renovated and seismically updated, while others have languished due to the exorbitant cost of retrofitting and the lack of funding. In particular, two SROs have been vacant (and seismically damaged) for a number of years and attempts to repair and re-open them have failed; others in this block need substantial maintenance, repairs and modernization. Also, the U.C. Theater, the block's primary entertainment anchor, is seismically damaged and, for economic reasons, may wish to add additional screens in the future. All of these factors combine to affect both the vitality of Downtown and the safety and security of nearby neighborhoods.

Several other planning and revitalization efforts are on-going within this area, including the "Civic Center Master Plan," which addresses the issues of seismic safety, urban design, and the siting of new civic facilities; the Downtown Arts District, which aims to make Addison Street and the area around the Berkeley Repertory Theater a new destination in downtown; and the "Downtown Public Improvements Plan," which calls for a wide variety of streetscape improvements on major streets in downtown.

Oxford Street, which is the edge of the U.C. campus, includes a mix of University-related offices, some retail, restaurants, underutilized structures, warehouses, and parking lots. High density apartments are located north and south of the study area along Oxford.

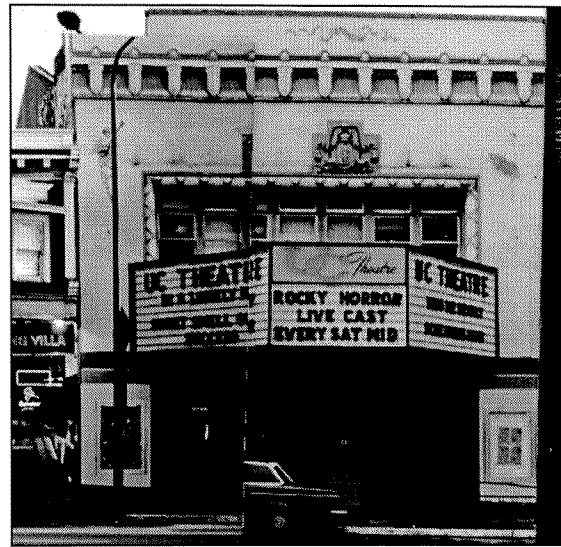
A concentration of residential uses within Sub-Area 4 is located west of Martin Luther King Jr. Way, just one block north and south of University. As in the other Sub-Areas, these neighborhoods are made up of a healthy mix of single-family bungalows, duplexes, and small apartment buildings.

Sub-Area 4 Revitalization Catalysts

The illustrative map opposite illustrates recommended interventions (or revitalization catalysts) on opportunity sites within Sub-Area

4. 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.

- The UC Theater is this sub-area's primary anchor along University Avenue and draws a strong customer base from within Berkeley and from a wider regional area. It is seismically damaged and may want to add additional screens in the future. Every effort should be made to retain this important use and assist with future building improvements.



UC Theater is the anchor use in Sub-Area 4. Despite its notoriety, the building is seismically damaged and needs repairs.

- This section of University Avenue is part of a larger entertainment focus to Downtown Berkeley and, thus, should be maintained and enhanced. A mix of live-entertainment uses, such as music bars, cafes, brew pubs, and restaurants, should be encouraged. New businesses that can provide name recognition and lend instant credibility for visitors, such as Peets Coffee or other Berkeley-grown businesses, would help strengthen the UC Theater’s position in the regional market.
- Along this section of University Avenue, several older buildings have recently been upgraded and renovated, while others are run-down, underutilized, or vacant. Target the Milvia to Shattuck block of University Avenue for use of the Seismic Rehabilitation Revolving Loan Fund, Facade Improvement Grants, and the Rental Acquisition Program, as well as stronger enforcement of the Anti-Blight Ordinance and other City codes. If successful, the program should be extended to the block between Shattuck and Oxford. In addition, new tenants should be solicited for buildings in this segment.
- Allow those SRO units that have been vacant for a number of years (approximately 55 units) to be considered for alternative uses and support the rehabilitation of the remaining 81 units. (See also Housing Policies, Strategy 15F.)
- The State Department of Health facility, located behind University and bounded by Shattuck, Oxford, Hearst and Berkeley Way, is planning to move to Richmond. Redevelopment of the site would provide a significant opportunity to fill in a major gap in the pattern of pedestrian-oriented retail uses fronting on Shattuck. Its location along Shattuck and between the U.C. campus and a multi-family residential neighborhood makes it an important transition project that will require a high level of design sensitivity. The University of California’s Long Range Development Plans for the Berkeley Campus designates the site as a potential joint development opportunity site. Along Shattuck a private retail, mixed-use Shattuck frontage development could serve to continue the pedestrian oriented uses along North Shattuck to University Avenue. A University development could help to replace the lost economic activity generated by the estimated 650 employees in the existing facility, as well as providing an opportunity to bring “activity generating” street level uses to the Downtown area, such as a visitor center, meeting spaces, service facilities, or a museum. If this site is considered for development by the University, the City should work with it to jointly develop a master plan and design guidelines for the site.
- Provide incentives for constructing housing and live-work opportunities in Downtown. Possible strategies might include reduced parking requirements, waived permit processing fees and/or financial assistance with seismic upgrades.
- Target the City’s Berkeley Way parking lot as a primary for redevelopment with mixed-use buildings with primarily housing and replacement parking. The Oxford Street parking lot should be considered as a second priority.
- In this Sub-Area there are several additional sites that are underutilized, including several existing office buildings along Oxford Street, and older auto-service uses along Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Their proximity to the Arts District and downtown makes these sites excellent opportunities for high density, arts-related, mixed-use projects.
- Secure a Mid-block Pedestrian Passageway between the City’s Berkeley Way parking lot and University Avenue.
- Continue to implement the Arts District plan for Addison Street and the “Civic Center Master Plan.”
- Work with U.C. to plan a “Campus Gateway” at Oxford and University. The city should take the lead in planning for a “Downtown Gateway” at MLK Way or Milvia and University Avenue.