



Planning and Development Department
Land Use Planning Division

NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP) OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND RESCHEDULED SCOPING MEETING FOR THE PROPOSED SOUTHSIDE ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

The City of Berkeley is preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for proposed revisions to the Zoning Ordinance for the Southside area (“proposed project”), as identified below, and is requesting comments on the scope and content of the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR will address the potential physical and environmental effects of the proposed project for each of the environmental topics outlined in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An Initial Study has been prepared and is available at the following webpage:

https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Planning_and_Development/Land_Use_Division/Current_Policy_Projects.aspx.

The City of Berkeley is the Lead Agency for the proposed project. This notice is being sent to the California State Clearinghouse, Alameda County Clerk, the University of California at Berkeley, potential responsible agencies, and other interested parties. Responsible agencies are those public agencies, besides the City of Berkeley, that also have a role in approving or carrying out the project. When the Draft EIR is published, a Notice of Availability of a Draft EIR will be sent to Responsible Agencies, other public agencies, and interested parties and individuals who have indicated that they would like to review the Draft EIR.

Responses to this NOP and any questions or comments should be directed in writing to: *Elizabeth Greene, Senior Planner, Planning and Development Department, 1947 Center Street, 2nd Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704*; or EGreene@cityofberkeley.info. The City has extended the public comment period which was originally scheduled to end August 24. Comments on the NOP must be received **on or before September 9, 2020**. In addition, comments may be provided at the rescheduled EIR Scoping Meeting (see below). Comments should focus on possible impacts on the physical environment, ways in which potential adverse effects might be minimized, and alternatives to the proposed project.

EIR PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING: The City of Berkeley Planning Commission will conduct a public scoping session at a Special Meeting on **September 2, 2020**, starting at **7:00 PM**. The hearing will be virtual. Interested parties should visit the Planning Commission webpage to confirm the meeting, time, date, and instructions on joining the meeting:

https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/Commissions/Commissions_Planning_Commission_Homepage.aspx.

PROJECT TITLE: Southside Zoning Ordinance Amendments Project

PROJECT LOCATION: The project location is the “Southside” or “Southside Area” of the City of Berkeley, as defined in the Southside Plan (2011). The Southside Area encompasses approximately 28 full city blocks and several more partial city blocks, directly south of the main campus of the University of California at Berkeley. It is generally bounded by Bancroft Way and the University on the north; Dwight Way on the south (including parcels on both sides of Dwight Way); Prospect Street on the east (including parcels on both sides of Prospect Street); and Fulton Street on the west (including some parcels extending west from Fulton towards Shattuck Avenue and Downtown Berkeley). The Southside Area also includes properties extending south along Telegraph Avenue between Dwight Way and Parker Street. Figure 1 shows the project area boundary.

PROJECT SPONSOR: City of Berkeley

EXISTING CONDITIONS: The Southside contains a diverse mix of land uses, including housing, offices, retail, religious and cultural institutions, schools, hotels, parking, recreational uses, and public streets. The most common existing use is residential, which currently occupies approximately 60% of the developable land in the Southside (excluding streets). In addition to housing, the Southside includes the important retail and social corridor of Telegraph Avenue, a major student-oriented street that provides storefront shopping, restaurants, community activity, and street vendors. Approximately eight properties in the Southside are present on one of the lists of hazardous waste sites enumerated under Section 95962.5 of the Government Code.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION and BACKGROUND: Since 2016, the City Council has forwarded six referrals to the Planning Commission related to increasing housing production and availability in the Southside Area. Responding to these six council referrals – along with City policy goals for increasing the availability and production of housing at all income levels – is the primary impetus for this project to amend the zoning standards and map in the Southside Area. Specific topical objectives and scope assumptions for the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendments are as follows:

- **Focus on Zoning and Housing.** Update the Southside zoning standards, particularly as they relate to housing capacity and the six referrals from City Council.
- **Encourage Affordable Housing.** Support affordable housing production at a mix of income levels, including housing for students, existing and future residents, and those that may have been displaced or burdened by rising housing costs.
- **Continue to Preserve Important Southside Resources.** Encourage the continued protection and support of important existing Southside resources, including historic buildings, cultural resources, local businesses and merchants, and existing housing – including market rate and rent-controlled housing, and including both renter-occupied and owner-occupied housing.
- **Understand and Coordinate with University Development Plans.** Understand and coordinating with University development plans, recognizing that the City does not have final zoning control over land owned by the University of California, which is controlled by the State of California.

- **Provide Programmatic CEQA Analysis for Future Housing.** Provide programmatic CEQA clearance for future housing development.
- **Address Fire Safety and Disaster Preparedness.** Address continued planning for fire safety and disaster preparedness in the Southside, including coordinating with the Fire Department on other citywide disaster preparedness efforts.
- **Encourage Alternatives to Driving.** Encourage walking, biking, transit, ride-sharing, and other alternatives to driving.
- **Align Development Standards with City Housing Goals.** Refine development standards to support City goals for housing availability and production at all income levels.

Table 3 in the Initial Study identifies the proposed modifications to the existing zoning ordinance that are intended to achieve the project objectives and the City Council referrals. These proposed zoning modifications include changes to a targeted number of zoning parameters: building heights, building footprints (including setbacks and lot coverage), parking, ground-floor residential use, and adjustments to the existing zoning district boundaries. Focusing on these specific components of zoning is anticipated and intended to expand housing capacity. Proposed development standard changes are limited to existing zoning districts within the Southside Area.

The maximum potential 20-year buildout scenario that may occur with proposed zoning modifications includes up to 4,597 new units or 10,344 new residents in the Southside compared to existing conditions, and a reduction of up to 130,000 square feet of retail space. Compared to what would be allowed under existing zoning without use permits, the proposed project could add up to 1,574 units or 3,543 residents. Compared to what would be allowed under existing zoning with use permits (which enable additional building height over base existing zoning), the proposed project could add up to 793 units or 1,784 residents.

For more information about the project, please visit the City's website: https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Planning_and_Development/Land_Use_Division/Current_Policy_Projects.aspx

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: Based on the analysis and conclusions contained in the Initial Study, it is anticipated that the proposed project may result in potentially significant environmental effects to the following:

- Air Quality;
- Cultural, Tribal Cultural, and Historic Resources;
- Energy;
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
- Land Use and Planning;
- Noise;
- Population and Housing;
- Public Services;
- Transportation; and,
- Utilities and Service Systems.

All of the noted environmental issues will be analyzed in the Draft EIR. All other CEQA environmental topics were found in the Initial Study to have no impact, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation incorporated. These include: Aesthetics; Agriculture and Forestry Resources; Biological Resources; Geology and Soils; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Hydrology and Water Quality; Mineral Resources; Recreation; and Wildfire.

The Draft EIR will also examine a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project, including the CEQA-mandated No Project Alternative and other potential alternatives that may be capable of reducing or avoiding potential environmental effects while generally meeting the project objectives. The Draft EIR will also analyze the cumulative impacts that could result with adoption and development under the proposed project.



Elizabeth Greene, Senior Planner

Date of Distribution: August 12, 2020

Attachment: Figure 1: Project Boundary

Figure 1



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Fig 2 Southside Area Location 20200417