

Mayor

Gabe Quinto

Mayor Pro Tem

Rebecca Saltzman

**AGENDA****Councilmembers**

William Ktsanes

Lisa Motoyama

Carolyn Wysinger

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TUESDAY, JULY 7, 2026**SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING (6:15 PM)**

Council Chambers - 10890 San Pablo Ave, El Cerrito

Join Via Zoom:<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86358078270?pwd=vLaowg2dkeC0nYZ6rRAdCDmM238ZaL.1>**Meeting ID:** 863 5807 8270 **Passcode:** 392895 **Dial in:** 1-408-638-0968**View:**

1. Cable T.V. Broadcast on KCRT Channel 28
2. Livestream Online at www.elcerrito.gov/MeetingsandAgendas

Public Comments:

1. In-person, by submitting a request to speak to the City Clerk.
2. Via Zoom, using the "[Raise Hand](#)" feature to request to speak.
3. By phone, dialing *9 to "raise your hand", and *6 to unmute.
4. Online, using the "[Submit Comments](#)" feature on the [meeting event](#).
5. Via email to cityclerk@elcerrito.gov indicating **Public Comments – Agenda Item #**.

Written comments received by **2:00 PM** the day of the meeting will be provided to the City Council and posted online in advance of the meeting. Comments received after the deadline will be provided to the City Council and posted after the meeting.

Accommodations: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk at 510-215-4305. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable accommodations. Closed Captions are available via zoom.

Conduct: This meeting is held pursuant to City Council [Rules of Order and Procedure](#).

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6:15 PM ROLL CALL - CONVENE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

- 1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OR OBSERVATION OF A MOMENT OF SILENCE**
- 2. TELECONFERENCE AND PUBLIC COMMENT INSTRUCTIONS**
- 3. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

A. Fifth Public Hearing on Transition to District-Based Elections – Introduction of an Ordinance to Establish District-based Elections, Adopt the Final Map to Establish District Boundaries, and Establish Sequence of District Elections

The set start time of this public hearing is 6:15 PM. Notice was published on 6/27/2026, draft maps were publically posted 6/30/2026 at www.elcerrito.gov/districts.

Action Proposed: Conduct a fifth public hearing and upon conclusion introduce the ordinance titled:

An Ordinance of the City of El Cerrito Amending Title 2 "Administration" of the El Cerrito Municipal Code to Add Section 2.04.007 "District Elections" Within Chapter 2.04 to Provide for the Election of Members of the City Council by Five Districts; Adopt the Final Map to Establish the District Boundaries and Establish the Sequence of District Elections.

Contact: Sky Woodruff, City Attorney; Holly M. Charléty, City Clerk, City Management

4. PRESENTATIONS

A. San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Implementation Update: Economic Development and Affordable Housing

Action Proposed: Receive and file a presentation on the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Economic Development and Affordable Housing Analysis and Implementation Strategy

Contact: Melanie Mintz, Community Development Director; Aissia Ashoori, Housing-Economic Development Program Manager, Community Development Department

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Councilmembers
William Ktsanes
Lisa Motoyama
Carolyn Wysinger

B. Resolution Honoring Community Development Director Melanie Mintz in Retirement

Action Proposed: Adopt a Resolution recognizing and honoring Community Development Director Melanie Mintz in retirement after serving the City of El Cerrito for 22 years.

Contact: Karen Pinkos, City Manager, City Management

5. ADJOURN SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

The City of El Cerrito serves our diverse community by providing exceptional services that create a safe and resilient future for all.



AGENDA BILL

Agenda Item No. 3.A.

Date: July 7, 2026
To: El Cerrito City Council
From: Sky Woodruff, City Attorney; Holly M. Charléty, City Clerk, City Management
Subject: Fifth Public Hearing on Transition to District-Based Elections – Introduction of an Ordinance to Establish District-based Elections, Adopt the Final Map to Establish District Boundaries, and Establish Sequence of District Elections

ACTION PROPOSED

Conduct a fifth public hearing and upon conclusion introduce the ordinance titled:
An Ordinance of the City of El Cerrito Amending Title 2 "Administration" of the El Cerrito Municipal Code to Add Section 2.04.007 "District Elections" Within Chapter 2.04 to Provide for the Election of Members of the City Council by Five Districts; Adopt the Final Map to Establish the District Boundaries and Establish the Sequence of District Elections.

BACKGROUND

On April 21, 2026, the City Council adopted Resolution 2026-24 declaring its intention to transition to a district-based system for electing members of the El Cerrito City Council. This action was taken in response to the March 17, 2026 letter received from Rexroad Law alleging that the City's current at-large election system violates the California Voting Rights Act ("CVRA") and threatening litigation if the City declined to voluntarily change to a district-based election.

Although the City denies its at-large election system violates the CVRA or any other provision of law, the City Council has determined that the public interest would best be served by transitioning to a district-based electoral system due to (1) the high cost to defend against a CVRA lawsuit, (2) the risk of losing such a lawsuit, which would require the City to pay the prevailing plaintiffs' attorneys' fees, and (3) the availability of changing to district elections under the safe harbor provision.

The City Council, an elected legislative body serving the residents of El Cerrito, is currently elected in an at-large election system, where each of the five Councilmembers are elected by registered voters of the entire city, regardless of residence, as opposed to a district-based election system, where each Councilmember must reside in a specific district within the City, and is voted on only by voters within that district.

California Elections Code section 10010 provides a process whereby a jurisdiction can expeditiously change to a district-based election system and avoid the high cost of litigation under the CVRA.

Under this process, a jurisdiction can limit the amount of its liability to prospective plaintiffs and their attorneys (the "safe harbor provision"), and avoid litigation so long as the jurisdiction completes the process within 90 days of the adoption of the resolution of intention. While the CVRA allows for extensions to this timeframe with agreement of the potential plaintiff, the City was unable to obtain an agreement for extensions.

Transition Process under the Safe Harbor Provision

California Elections Code section 10010 requires that a jurisdiction changing to district-based elections under the safe harbor provision do all of the following within 90 days from the date the legislative body adopts a resolution of intent to transition to district-based elections:

- Before drawing a draft map or maps of the proposed boundaries of the districts, hold at least two public hearings over a period of no more than 30 days, at which the public is invited to provide input regarding the composition of the districts.
- After all draft maps are drawn, published, and made available, release at least one draft map and, if members of the governing body of the political subdivision will be elected in their districts at different times, provide the potential sequence of the staggered terms of office and elections.
- Hold at least two additional hearings over a period of no more than 45 days, at which the public is invited to provide input regarding the content of the draft map or maps and the proposed sequence of elections.
 - The first version of a draft map shall be published at least seven days before consideration at a hearing. If a draft map is revised at or following a hearing, it shall be published and made available to the public for at least seven days before being adopted.
- Adopt an ordinance establishing district-based elections pursuant to Elections Code section 10010(a).

In order to provide tools for community input, and to draw preliminary maps based on community and City Council feedback, the City Attorney has retained Redistricting Partners, LLC, a demographer who serves as an expert in analyzing census data to ensure that the final district map adopted by the City Council considers all of the necessary criteria, as set forth in Elections Code Section 21130(c), including geographic contiguity and compactness, preservation of neighborhoods and communities of interest, uses easily identifiable boundaries, and does not favor or discriminate against a political party.

It's important to note, however, that despite the accelerated 90-day transition process, based on the deadlines imposed by the Contra Costa County Elections department related to district maps, it has been determined that the earliest election feasible for the new district-based maps to take effect will commence with the November 2028 General Municipal Election. As such, elections for City Council seats taking place in November 2026 will continue to use the current at-large election system.

Completed Actions to Date

Detailed information, materials, and videos regarding completed actions for the districting process are available at www.elcerrito.gov/districts.

- **April 21, 2026:** Adopted Resolution of Intent to Transition to Districts
- **May 5, 2026:** 1st Public Hearing held
- **May 12, 2026:** 1st Community Workshop held virtually
- **May 14, 2026:** Community Outreach at Bike to Wherever Day event
- **May 19, 2026:** 2nd Public Hearing held; Council direction to proceed with 5 districts
- **June 3, 2026:** 2nd Community Workshop held in City Council Chambers
- **June 9, 2026:** 3rd Public Hearing held
- **June 10, 2026:** Community Outreach conducted at the El Cerrito Community Center
- **June 16, 2026:** 4th Public Hearing held
- **July 4, 2026:** Community Outreach conducted at El Cerrito/worldOne 4th of July Festival

Remaining Public Hearing and Events Schedule

The proposed schedule for the remainder of the districting process includes tentative dates to hold additional public hearings, and other relevant actions required under the safe harbor provisions. This tentative schedule was developed to be as transparent and informative as possible given the 90-day restriction to complete the process. Should the potential plaintiff decide to negotiate terms of an agreement to extend the period of time for this transition, a revised schedule would be brought back to the City Council at a future date.

- **July 7, 2026:** 5th Public Hearing
 - Approve final map, sequence of elections, and Ordinance to change to District-Based Elections
- **July 21, 2026:** Adopt Ordinance
 - Adopt the Ordinance to change to District-Based Elections

ANALYSIS

Before drawing a draft map or maps of the proposed boundaries of the districts, the City was required to hold two public hearings to receive public input regarding the composition of districts. These hearings were held on May 5 and May 19, 2026.

Coinciding with a community workshop held on May 12, a district mapping tool was launched on the City's website at www.elcerrito.gov/districts. This interactive tool allows members of the El Cerrito community to provide input by submitting their own maps for consideration. A printable map to draw lines and submit to the City was also made available. In addition, community members are able to submit a "Community of Interests Form" for consideration in drawing district boundaries. At the second public hearing on May 19, the City Council provided direction to proceed with five districts.

A third and fourth public hearing were held on June 9 and June 16 respectively, at which the City's demographer presented draft maps to the community and City Council for consideration. These maps were drafted based on all available public input received to date and in compliance with the District Formation Criteria described below. At these hearings additional input was received and general direction was provided by City Council to refine and return with a single map for consideration. The draft map was published June 30, 2026 on the [City's Districting](#) webpage to make it available to the public for review in advance of holding this fifth and final public hearing on July 7. Twelve additional draft maps, which were submitted by the public, were also published on June 30, 2026 on the City's Districting webpage for public review.

The format for the fifth public hearing will include holding a public hearing to receive final public input on the map(s) being considered for adoption. After closing the public hearing, the City Council will be asked to take formal action to introduce an Ordinance to Establish District-based Elections, Adopt the Final Map to Establish District Boundaries, and Establish the Sequence of District Elections.

District Formation Criteria

In creating the district boundaries, the City must ensure compliance with the following criteria mandated by the CVRA and the Federal Voting Rights Act:

- Each district must contain a nearly equal population;
- The districting plan must be drawn in a manner that complies with the Federal Voting Rights Act and the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution; and,
- The districts must not be drawn with race as the predominant factor.

Additionally, Election Code section 21130 requires cities to adopt districts using the following criteria to the extent practicable, which are set forth in order of priority:

- Districts shall be geographically contiguous.
- To the extent practicable, the geographic integrity of any local neighborhood or local community of interest must be respected and maintained. A "community of Interest" is a population that shares common social or economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation.
- District boundaries should be easily identifiable and understandable. To the extent practicable, districts shall be bounded by natural and artificial barriers, by streets, or by the boundaries of the jurisdiction.
- To the extent practicable, and where it does not conflict with the preceding criteria, districts shall be drawn to encourage geographical compactness.

The City's demographer will present maps that comply with these criteria.

Next Steps

Following the fifth public hearing, the adopted map and sequence of elections will be finalized in the introduced Ordinance, which will be brought back to the City Council on July 21, 2026 for adoption. Once the ordinance is adopted, it will be codified into the City's municipal code and staff will begin the work to transition the City's election process to hold the November 2028 election in compliance with the new district-based election process.

Public Outreach

In addition to the formal public hearing process, the City has undertaken an extensive effort to encourage participation and inclusivity as a part of the districting process, including:

- Hosting a dedicated page for districting on the City's website at www.elcerrito.gov/districts, which includes information on the districting process, how to provide public input, documents and details of past actions, draft maps, and community input submissions.
- Utilizing an interactive online tool for community members to easily submit input on communities of interest and potential district boundaries, in addition to providing paper-based options for submitting feedback.
- Conducting in-person outreach around the community, at Bike to Wherever Day (May 14, 2026), at the Community Center (June 10, 2026), and at the annual City of El Cerrito/worldOne July 4th Festival (July 4, 2026).
- Translating key outreach collateral and documents, including frequently asked questions and instructions for how to provide input, into Spanish and Chinese (Simplified), the two most commonly spoken languages in El Cerrito other than English.
- And, using a variety of public communication channels to engage members of the community and solicit feedback throughout the development of potential maps and the transition to district-based elections, including social media, e-newsletters, and other City outreach channels.

Council Action Required

In order to complete the process required under California Elections Code section 10010 within the 90 day safe harbor provision, the City Council is asked to take the following action at this fifth public hearing:

1. Pass a motion to select the final map to set the district boundaries;
2. Pass a motion to assign each district a number, determining which three districts will be up for election in 2028 and which two will be up for election in 2030; and
3. Introduce the proposed ordinance to implement District-Based elections with the selected map and sequence of elections.

STRATEGIC PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

This action supports the [City's Strategic Plan Goal\(s\)](#) of:

- *High Performing Organization; and*
- *Livability and Belonging.*

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section is not applicable to this agenda item.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Adoption of the ordinance completing the transition to district-based elections will effectively complete the process under the Safe Harbor Provisions of the California Elections Code. In doing so, the City of El Cerrito can limit the amount of liability to prospective plaintiffs and their attorneys and avoid litigation related to allegations surrounding the City's current at-large election system. Costs associated with holding the hearing are covered under the funds appropriated by the City Council to complete the transition process. There are no additional financial considerations or actions required for this hearing or to implement the ordinance transitioning to district-based elections.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

The City Attorney has reviewed and approved this item and all actions are in compliance with applicable regulatory requirements.

Reviewed by:



Karen Pinkos, City Manager

Attachments:

1. Ordinance
2. Presentation

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-XX

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF EL CERRITO AMENDING TITLE 2 "ADMINISTRATION" OF THE EL CERRITO MUNICIPAL CODE TO ADD SECTION 2.04.007 "DISTRICT ELECTIONS" WITHIN CHAPTER 2.04 TO PROVIDE FOR THE ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL BY FIVE DISTRICTS; ADOPT THE FINAL MAP TO ESTABLISH THE DISTRICT BOUNDARIES; AND ESTABLISH THE SEQUENCE OF DISTRICT ELECTIONS

WHEREAS, members of the City Council are currently elected in "at-large" elections, in which each City Councilmember is elected by the registered voters of the entire City; and

WHEREAS, California Government Code section 34886, in certain circumstances, authorizes the legislative body of a city of any population to adopt an ordinance to change its method of election from an "at-large" system to a "district-based" system in which each councilmember is elected only by the voters in the district in which the candidate resides; and

WHEREAS, on March 17, 2026, the City received a letter from the law firm of Rexroad Law alleging that the City's at-large election system violates the California Voting Rights Act ("CVRA"), and threatening litigation if the City declines to voluntarily change to a district-based election system for electing Councilmembers; and

WHEREAS, although the City denies its at-large election system violates the CVRA or any other provision of law, the City Council determined that the public interest would best be served by transitioning to a district-based electoral system due to (1) the high cost to defend against a CVRA lawsuit, (2) the risk of losing such a lawsuit, which would require the City to pay the prevailing plaintiffs' attorneys' fees, and (3) the availability of changing to district elections under the "safe harbor provision" of Elections Code Section 10010; and

WHEREAS, on April 21, 2026 the City Council adopted Resolution No. 2026-24 declaring its intention to transition from "at-large" to "district-based" elections beginning with the November 2028 General Municipal Election; and

WHEREAS, thereafter, pursuant to Election Code Section 10010, the City Council held two public hearings on May 5 and May 19, 2026 where the public was invited to provide input regarding the number and composition of the City's voting districts before any draft maps were drawn; and

WHEREAS, thereafter, pursuant to Election Code Section 10010, the City Council held two public hearings on June 9 and June 16, 2026 where the public was invited to provide input regarding the content of the draft maps that had been released at least seven (7) days before each meeting, and the proposed sequence of elections; and

WHEREAS, at the conclusion of the fifth public hearing held on July 7, 2026, the City Council formally selected the Council District Map NAME and the election sequence, attached to and incorporated herein as Exhibit A to this Ordinance, which was introduced for a first reading at that time with a second reading and adoption scheduled to take place on July 21, 2026; and

WHEREAS, throughout the foregoing process, the City engaged in a significant amount of public outreach and engagement above and beyond the public procedures required by California Elections Code Section 10010 and those portions of the Fair and Inclusive Redistricting for Municipalities and Political Subdivisions (Fair Maps) Act applicable to cities that are transitioning for the first time to district-based elections systems; and

WHEREAS, such outreach included but is not limited to, maintaining a City webpage dedicated to the process of transitioning from at-large elections to district-based elections, regularly notifying residents of meetings and other engagements on the City's social media channels and in City newsletters, hosting two community workshops, posting and publishing notices for all public hearings, and attending multiple community events to discuss the districting process; and

WHEREAS, in selecting the map, the City Council considered the criteria set forth in Elections Code Section 21130 of the Fair Maps Act and is adopting district boundaries in accordance with the provisions stated therein, as well as the federal Voting Rights Act and the California Voting Rights Act; and

WHEREAS, Council District Map **NAME** meets all the requirements of state and federal law and was posted on June 30, 2026 on the City's website for public consideration, at least seven (7) days before the introduction of this Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of this Ordinance is to enact, pursuant to California Government Code section 34886, an ordinance providing for the election of members of the City Council of the City of El Cerrito by district in five single-member districts as reflected in Exhibit A to this Ordinance and to implement the guarantees of the California Constitution.

NOW THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EL CERRITO DOES HEREBY ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1: Incorporation of Recitals. The City Council finds that the above Recitals are true and correct and are incorporated herein by reference.

Section 2: Amendment of Municipal Code. Title 2 "Administration" of the El Cerrito Municipal Code is hereby amended to add Section 2.04.007, "District Elections", within Chapter 2.04 to read as follows:

2.04.007 – District Elections

A. Declaration of Purpose: The City Council of the City of El Cerrito hereby declares that the change of method of electing members of this Council, hereby enacted, is being made in furtherance of the California Voting Rights Act.

B. City Council Districts Established. Five City Council districts are hereby established in the City of El Cerrito. The district boundaries and identifying number of each district shall be as described on the Council District Map **NAME** as illustrated in Figure 2.04.007-A.

Figure 2.04.007-A

{INSERT DISTRICT MAP}

C. Election of Members of the City Council by District.

1. Following the effective date of this ordinance and upon the commencement of “district-based” elections pursuant to section 2.04.007(D), members of the City Council shall be elected “by district,” as defined in California Government Code Section 34871, or any successor statute.

2. Registered voters signing nomination papers or voting for a member of the City Council shall be residents of the geographical area making up the district from which the member is to be elected.

3. No term of any member of the City Council that commences prior to the November 7, 2028 General Municipal Election shall be affected by the adoption of this ordinance.

D. Commencement of District Elections. Commencing with the general municipal election in November of 2028 and every four years thereafter the voters in districts 1, 3, and 5 shall elect members of the City Council by district for full four (4) year terms. At the general municipal election in November of 2030 and every four years thereafter, the voters in districts 2 and 4 shall elect members of the City Council by district for full four (4) year terms.

Section 3. Authorization for Technical Adjustments. The City’s demographer, Redistricting Partners, is hereby authorized to make non-substantive technical adjustments to Council District Map NAME to finalize the Map as necessary and to prepare a GIS shapefile which identifies the Council district boundaries, as well as the census blocks and tracts. The final Council District Map NAME, the census blocks and tracts and the GIS shapefile shall be in a form approved by the City Clerk and City Attorney.

Section 4: Severability. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this Ordinance is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional by a decision of any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance. The City Council hereby declares that it would have adopted the Ordinance, and each and every section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase not declared invalid or unconstitutional without regard to whether any portion of this Ordinance would be subsequently declared invalid or unconstitutional.

Section 5: Effective Date. This Ordinance shall take effect and be enforced thirty days after the date of its adoption. Prior to the expiration of fifteen days from the passage thereof, the Ordinance or a summary thereof shall be posted or published as may be required by law, and thereafter the same shall be in full force and effect.

THE FOREGOING ORDINANCE was introduced at a special meeting of the City Council on July 7, 2026 and passed by the following vote:

AYES: Councilmembers
NOES: Councilmembers
ABSENT: Councilmembers
ABSTAIN: Councilmembers

ADOPTED AND ORDERED published at a regular meeting of the City Council held on July 21, 2026 and passed by the following vote:

AYES: Councilmembers
NOES: Councilmembers
ABSENT: Councilmembers
ABSTAIN: Councilmembers

APPROVED:

Gabe Quinto, Mayor

ATTEST:

Holly M. Charl  ty, City Clerk

ORDINANCE CERTIFICATION

I, Holly M. Charl  ty, City Clerk of the City of El Cerrito, do hereby certify that this Ordinance is the true and correct original Ordinance No. (2026-XX) of the City of El Cerrito; that said Ordinance was duly enacted and adopted by the City Council of the City of El Cerrito at a meeting of the City Council held on the 21 day of July, 2026; and that said Ordinance has been published and/or posted in the manner required by law.

WITNESS my hand and Official Seal of the City of El Cerrito on _____
_____.

Holly M. Charl  ty, City Clerk



Fifth Public hearing
July 7, 2026

What is the CVRA?

The California Voting Rights Act is a state law that prohibits the use of At Large Election Systems in local government if there is Racially Polarized Voting.

“At Large” is defined as anything other than a system in which an elected official lives in a district, and is only elected by members of that district. Does not include “multi-member” districts.

Districts are being drawn under this expedited process, but will not be done in time for the 2026 election. The first election under these lines will be in 2028.

Required Redistricting Criteria

Traditional redistricting principles used throughout the country and written into state law

There are a number of criteria that are required under the FAIR MAPS Act (ranked):

- Relatively equal size - people, not citizens
- Contiguous – districts should not hop/jump
- Maintain “*communities of interest*”
- Easily identifiable and understandable lines, following natural and man-made boundaries
- Keep districts compact – appearance/function

Additional Redistricting Rules

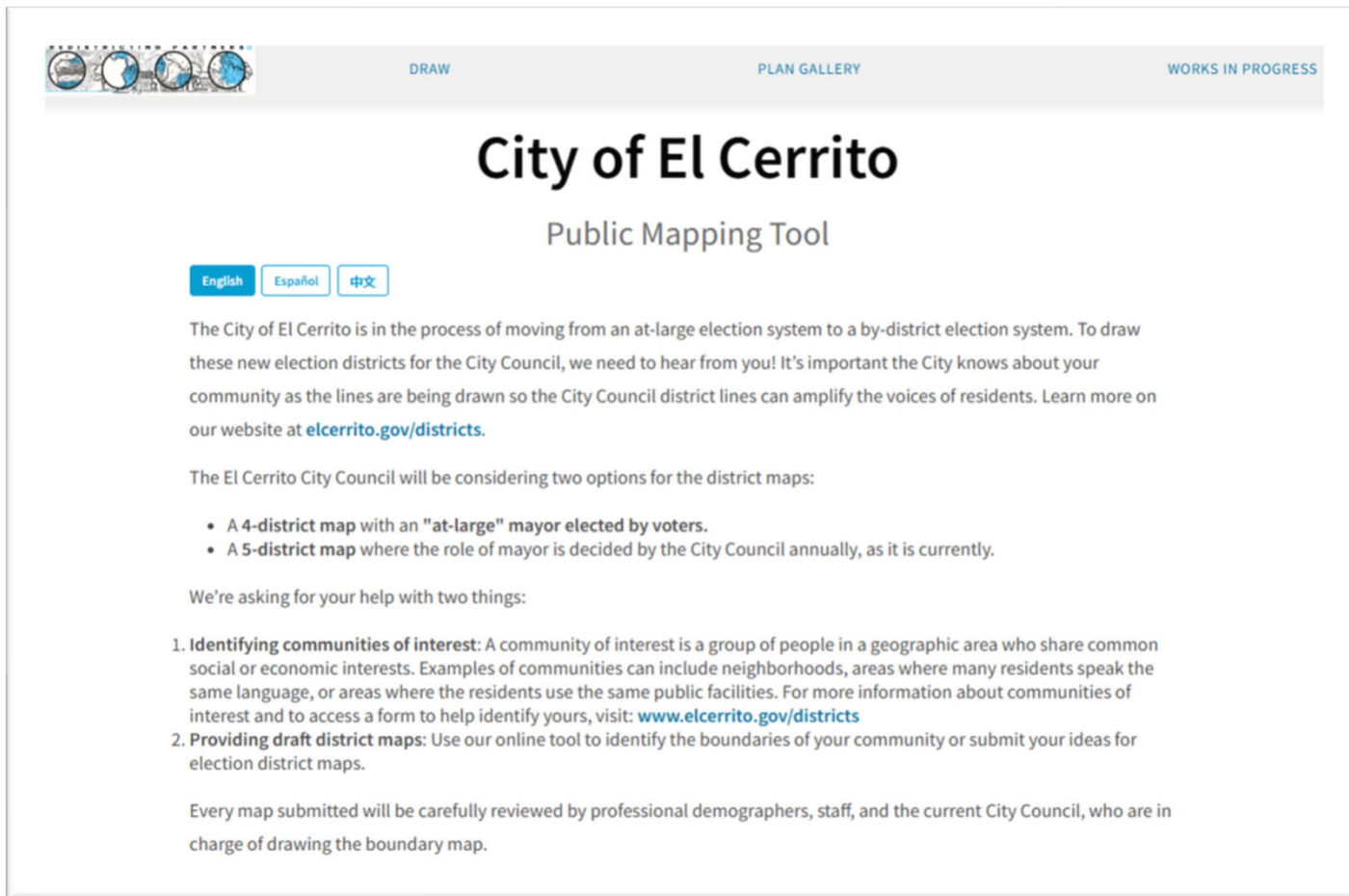
Criteria required beyond Traditional Principles

The FAIR MAPS Act adds more criteria to the process.

- Not consider Incumbents / Candidates.
- Not draw districts to advantage or disadvantage a political party.
- Hold minimum set of hearings, encourage public engagement.
- Posting of all districting/redistricting information on a website that is maintained *for the next 10 years*.

Online Mapping Tool

<https://www.udrawthelines.com/>



The screenshot shows the 'City of El Cerrito Public Mapping Tool' website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with three tabs: 'DRAW', 'PLAN GALLERY', and 'WORKS IN PROGRESS'. Below the navigation bar, the title 'City of El Cerrito' is prominently displayed, followed by 'Public Mapping Tool'. There are three language selection buttons: 'English' (highlighted), 'Español', and '中文'. The main content area contains a paragraph explaining the city's transition from an at-large election system to a by-district system, followed by a bulleted list of two options for district maps. Below this, it states the city council is asking for help with two things, followed by a numbered list of two tasks: identifying communities of interest and providing draft district maps. The page concludes with a statement that all submitted maps will be reviewed by professional demographers, staff, and the current City Council.

English Español 中文

The City of El Cerrito is in the process of moving from an at-large election system to a by-district election system. To draw these new election districts for the City Council, we need to hear from you! It's important the City knows about your community as the lines are being drawn so the City Council district lines can amplify the voices of residents. Learn more on our website at elcerrito.gov/districts.

The El Cerrito City Council will be considering two options for the district maps:

- A 4-district map with an "at-large" mayor elected by voters.
- A 5-district map where the role of mayor is decided by the City Council annually, as it is currently.

We're asking for your help with two things:

1. **Identifying communities of interest:** A community of interest is a group of people in a geographic area who share common social or economic interests. Examples of communities can include neighborhoods, areas where many residents speak the same language, or areas where the residents use the same public facilities. For more information about communities of interest and to access a form to help identify yours, visit: www.elcerrito.gov/districts
2. **Providing draft district maps:** Use our online tool to identify the boundaries of your community or submit your ideas for election district maps.

Every map submitted will be carefully reviewed by professional demographers, staff, and the current City Council, who are in charge of drawing the boundary map.

Public Submissions

Dozens of maps drawn on Districtr Tool with a variety of different layouts and prioritizing different communities of interest.

- San Pablo Corridor
- Downtown/Urban Density
- School District Areas
- Hillsides/Open Space/Fire
- Renter community
- Other Criteria

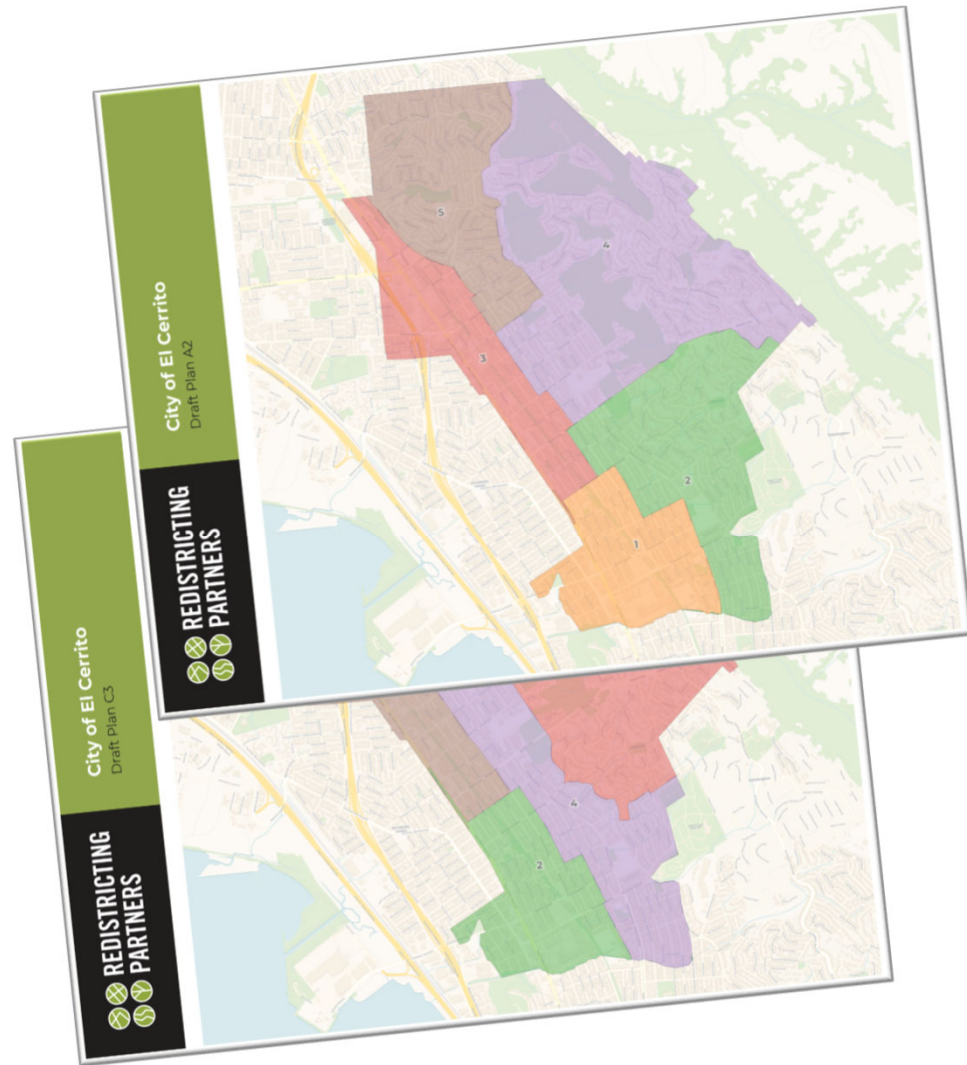


Maps Under Consideration

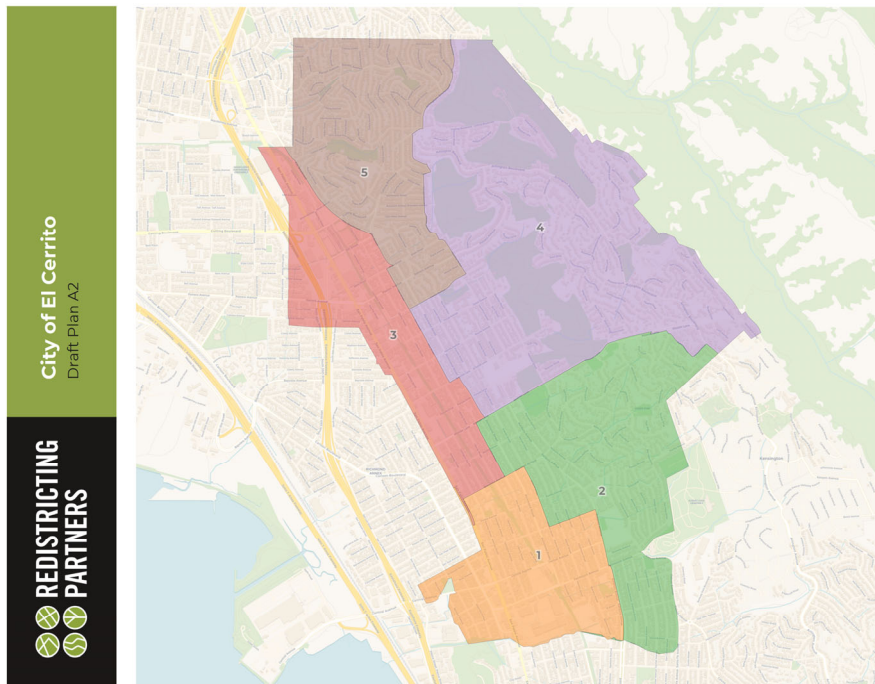
At the fourth hearing the council narrowed the maps they are considering to the following:

Draft A2 – a revision of Plan A to protect a renter COI

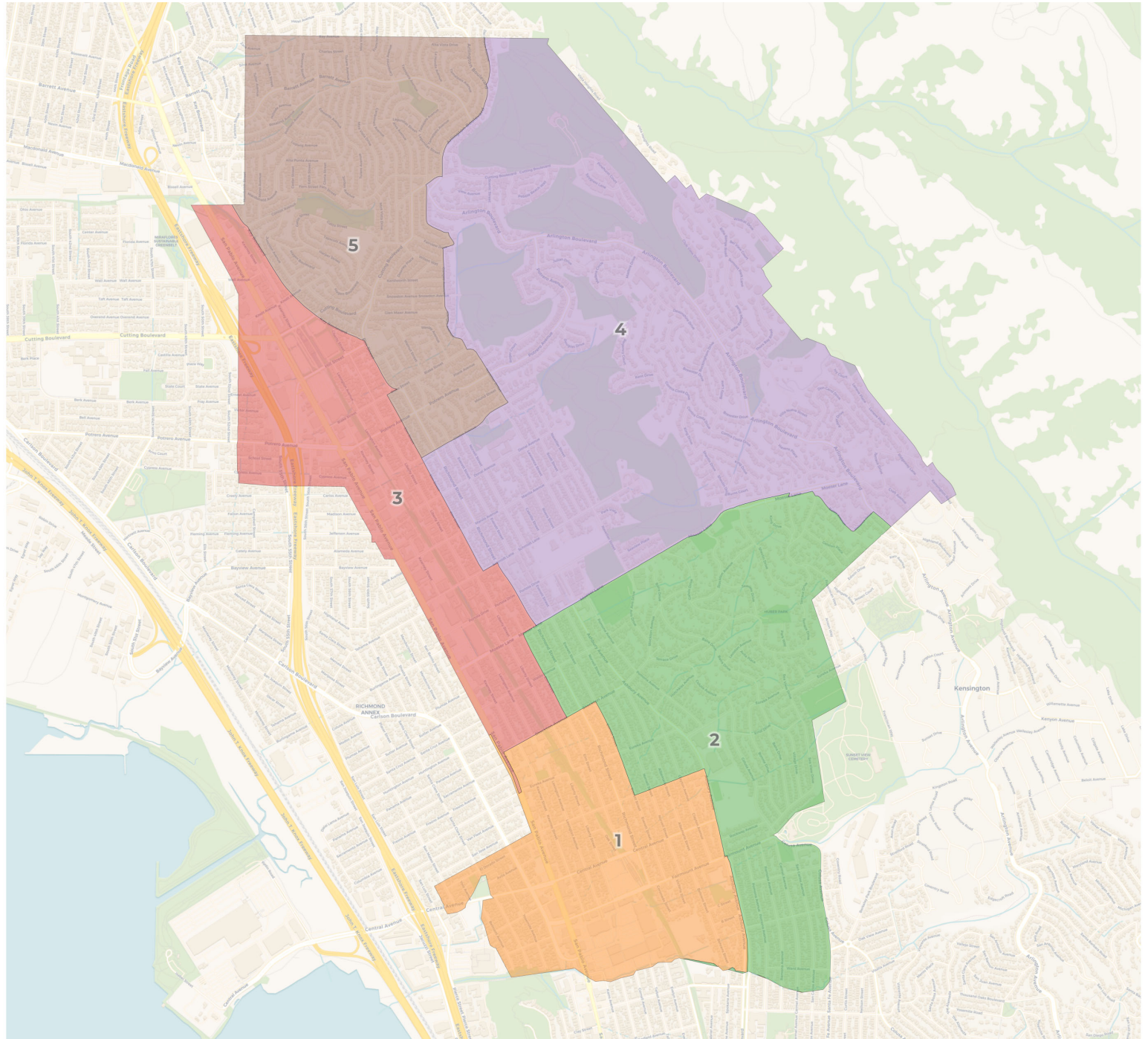
Draft C3 – a revision of C2 to make more understandable lines.



Draft Maps: Draft A2



- Total Population Deviation: 2%
- Based on School District Attendance Areas
- Compact Shapes
- Maintains Hillside Area
- Adjusted around Renter COI



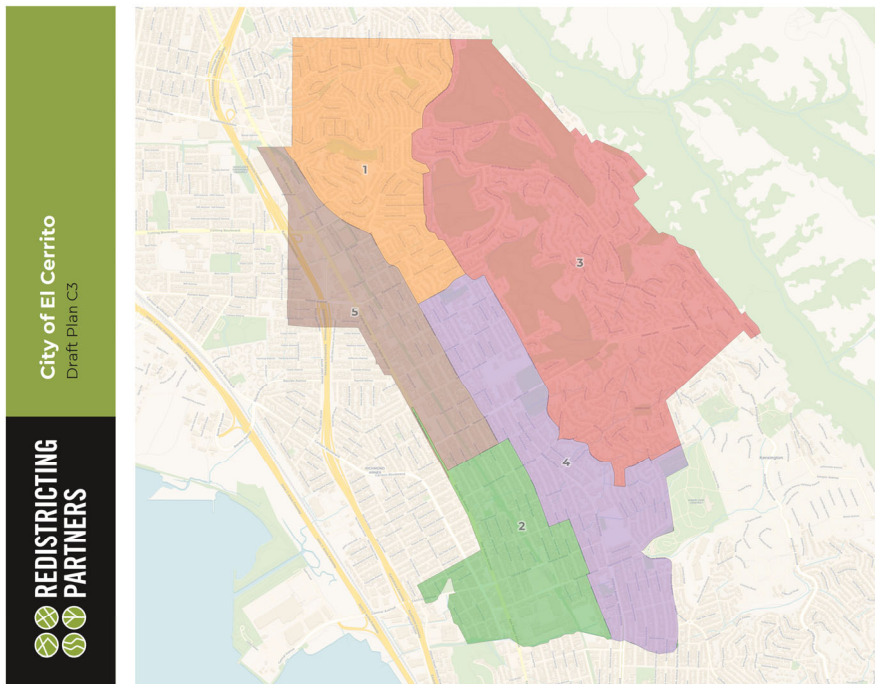
2020 Census

	1	2	3	4	5
Population	5,213	5,221	5,173	5,145	5,248
Deviation	13	21	-27	-55	48
Deviation %	0.2%	0.4%	-0.5%	-1.1%	0.9%
Other	2,222	3,569	1,881	3,019	3,118
Other %	42.6%	68.4%	36.4%	58.7%	59.4%
Latino	722	478	885	510	490
Latino %	13.8%	9.2%	17.1%	9.9%	9.3%
Asian	2,030	1,033	1,894	1,415	1,330
Asian %	38.9%	19.8%	36.6%	27.5%	25.3%
Black	239	141	513	201	310
Black %	4.6%	2.7%	9.9%	3.9%	5.9%

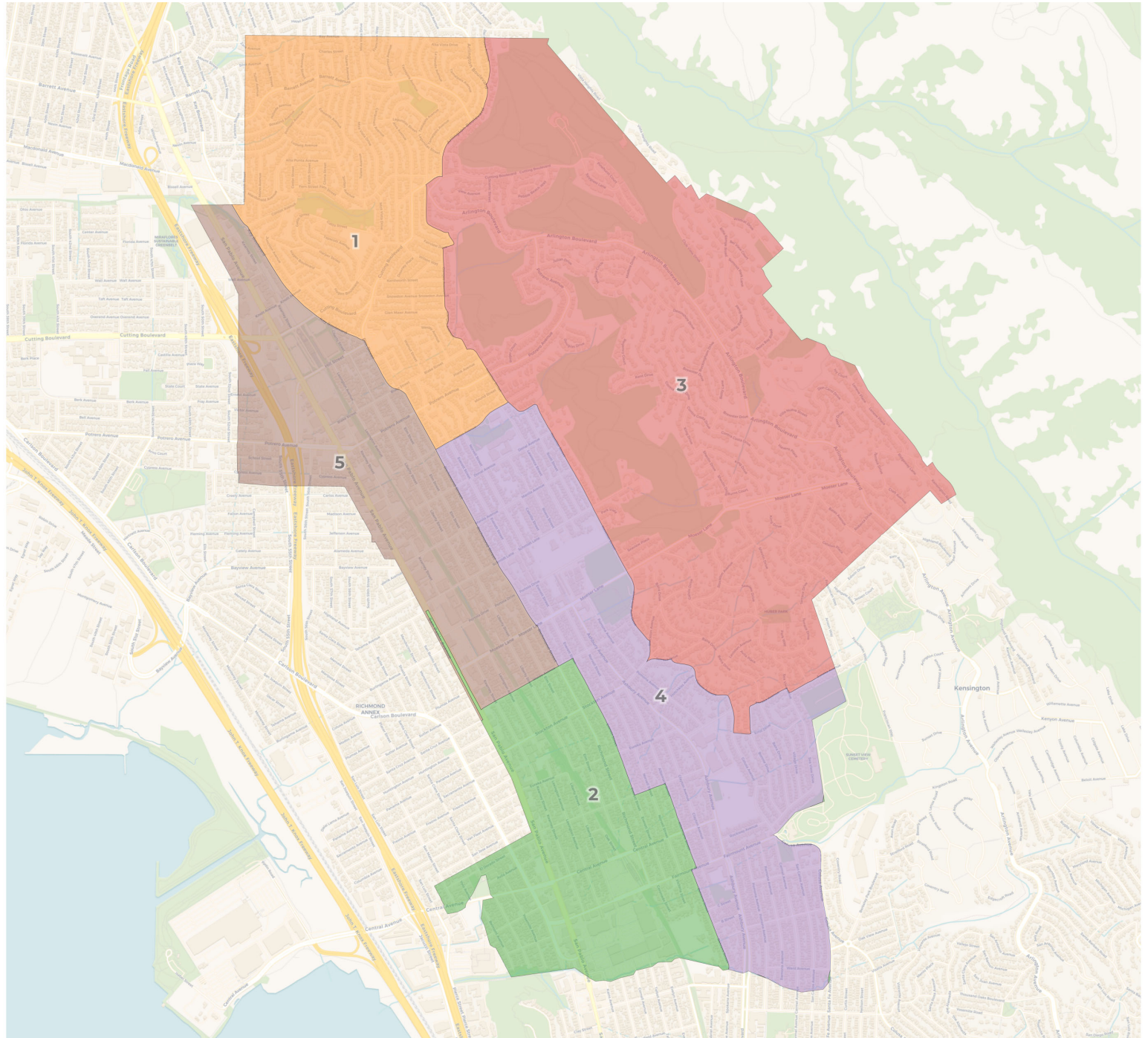
Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP)

	1	2	3	4	5
Total CVAP	3,363	3,363	4,338	4,338	3,211
Other CVAP	1,527	2,808	1,328	2,438	2,456
Other CVAP %	43.6%	71.8%	44.4%	59.7%	62.7%
Latino CVAP	603	377	567	465	274
Latino CVAP %	17.2%	9.6%	19.0%	11.4%	7.0%
Asian CVAP	1,116	673	825	1,063	922
Asian CVAP %	31.8%	17.2%	27.6%	26.0%	23.6%
Black CVAP	259	51	270	118	262
Black CVAP %	7.4%	1.3%	9.0%	2.9%	6.7%

Draft Maps: Draft C3



- Total Population Deviation: 3.3%
 - Creates Hillside District
 - San Pablo Corridor Seat
 - Follows major streets
 - Adjusted for Renter COI
-
- Adjustment of Plan C2 done live at hearing #4



2020 Census

	1	2	3	4	5
Population	5,103	5,273	5,248	5,222	5,154
Deviation	-97	73	48	22	-46
Deviation %	-1.9%	1.4%	0.9%	0.4%	-0.9%
Other	3,032	2,191	3,354	3,346	1,886
Other %	59.4%	41.6%	63.9%	64.1%	36.6%
Latino	477	733	392	608	875
Latino %	9.3%	13.9%	7.5%	11.6%	17.0%
Asian	1,293	2,096	1,283	1,140	1,890
Asian %	25.3%	39.7%	24.4%	21.8%	36.7%
Black	301	253	219	128	503
Black %	5.9%	4.8%	4.2%	2.5%	9.8%

Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP)

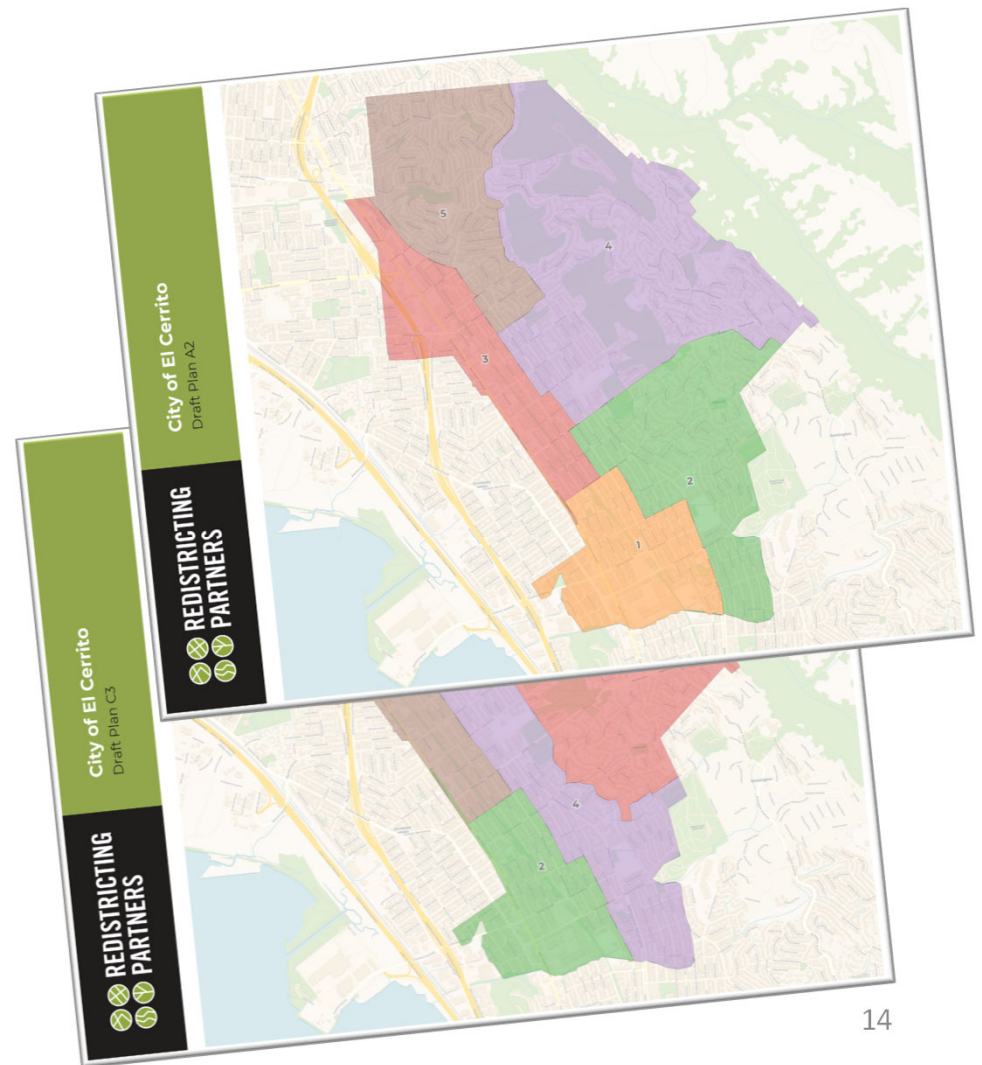
	1	2	3	4	5
Total CVAP	3,816	3,423	4,053	4,056	3,054
Other CVAP	2,382	1,500	2,627	2,685	1,363
Other CVAP %	62.4%	43.8%	64.8%	66.2%	44.6%
Latino CVAP	265	573	440	431	577
Latino CVAP %	6.9%	16.7%	10.9%	10.6%	18.9%
Asian CVAP	907	1,108	879	859	846
Asian CVAP %	23.8%	32.4%	21.7%	21.2%	27.7%
Black CVAP	262	242	107	81	268
Black CVAP %	6.9%	7.1%	2.6%	2.0%	8.8%

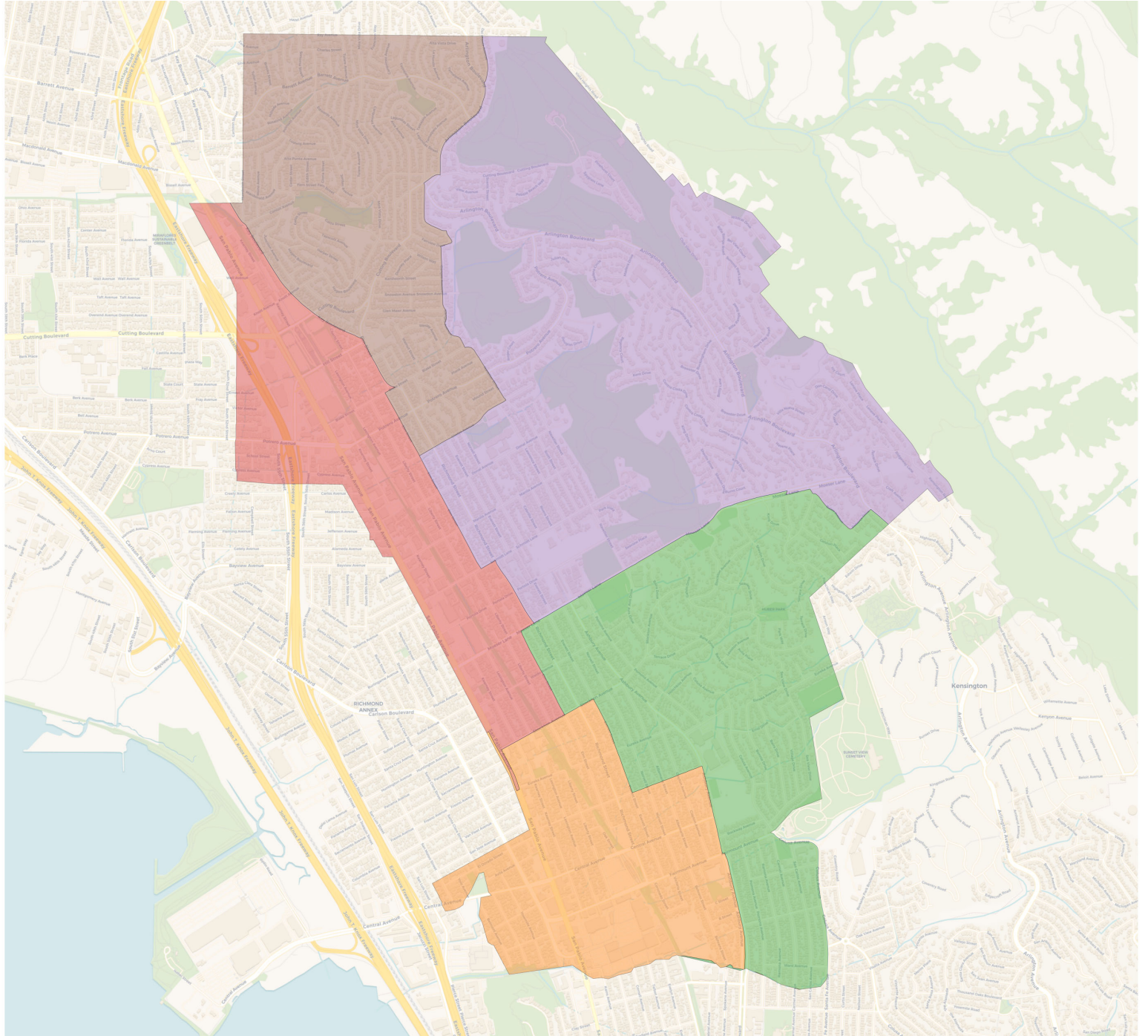
Sequencing of Elections

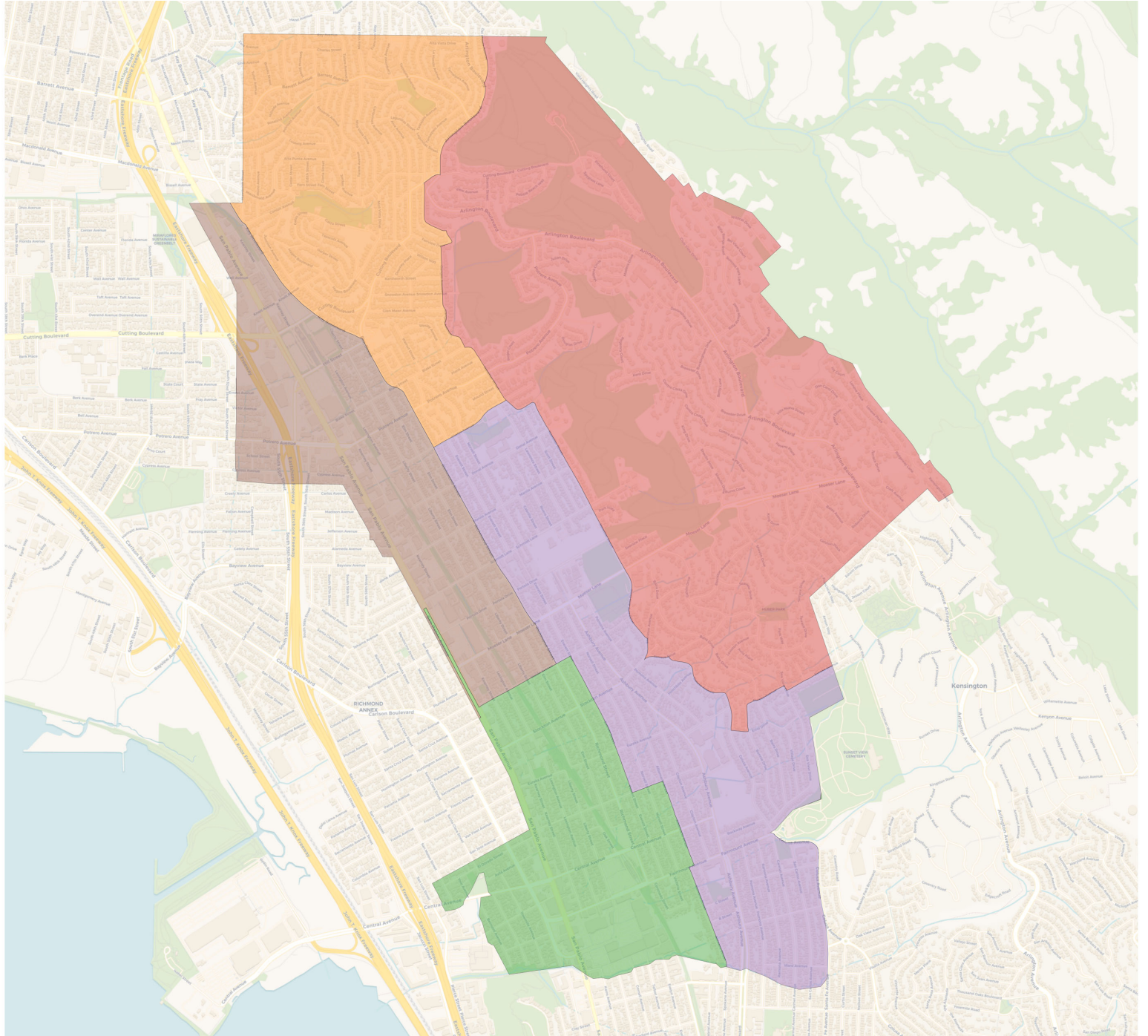
After selecting a map the council can use one of the blank maps to assign the district numbers based on the color of each seat.

Odd Numbers go to seats up in 2028

Even Numbers go to seats up in 2030







City of El Cerrito

First two public hearings devoted to community of interest
testimony gathering and education on districting process

Public Hearing Schedule

May 5, 2026

First public hearing

May 19, 2025

Second public hearing

June 9, 2026

Third public hearing (first maps hearing)

June 16, 2026

Fourth public hearing

July 7, 2026

Fifth public hearing (vote on maps)



AGENDA BILL

Agenda Item No. 4.A.

Date: July 7, 2026
To: El Cerrito City Council
From: Melanie Mintz, Community Development Director; Aissia Ashoori, Housing-Economic Development Program Manager, Community Development Department
Subject: San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Implementation Update: Economic Development and Affordable Housing

ACTION PROPOSED

Receive and file a presentation on the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Economic Development and Affordable Housing Analysis and Implementation Strategy

BACKGROUND

On [January 21, 2025](#), the City Council authorized staff to enter into an agreement with Strategic Economics ([Resolution 2025-02](#)) to complete the *San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Economic Development and Affordable Housing Analysis and Implementation Strategy*. This professional services contract was funded by the 2018 Priority Development Area (PDA) Planning Grant awarded by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) that also funded the 2022 San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Update ([Resolution 2022-090](#)).

ANALYSIS

As a result of the success of the 2014 San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, an update was needed to provide additional development capacity to continue to streamline processes and attract and support new housing and economic development opportunities. The original Environmental Impact Report analyzed 1,706 residential units and at the time the update was initiated, had 1,580 units planned, entitled, under construction or completed, leaving only 126 units to be entitled under the 2014 Plan.

As a result of the 2014 Plan, El Cerrito saw a variety of major projects completed along/near the [San Pablo Avenue Corridor](#) comprised of both new housing and commercial opportunities. Some of these projects include Credence Condominiums (32 units), Cerrito Vista Apartments (50 units), Mayfair Station market rate apartments (156 units plus 8,894 square feet of first floor commercial), and Elora below-market rate apartments (69 units). Since 2014 also, there have been a number of [new small and large business](#) openings in existing spaces, some with major tenant improvements/remodels, including Mugunghwa, Autozone, 24 Hour Fitness, Security Public Storage, banter, Stiizy, NUG, Plank and Power, Harbor Freight and others.

Currently, El Cerrito Parcel A-South (69 units of below-market-rate residential units) at the El Cerrito Plaza transit-oriented development, Crunch Fitness at El Cerrito Plaza, and a collection of commercial businesses have or are being built out as "first generation" commercial tenants on the first floor of Mayfair Station including Baysics Convenience Store (open), Qimmah Coffee House (early 2027), Sa Wad Dee Thai (early 2027), Nepalese/Tibetan restaurant (2027).

However, after the COVID-19 pandemic, economic feasibility of new development shifted, and many entitled projects have not proceeded, as applications for new development have slowed significantly. The challenges faced by new market-rate and commercial development are not unique to El Cerrito, and are being experienced throughout the Bay Area and beyond. The purpose of the Analysis and Implementation Strategy update is to provide information specific to El Cerrito to help formulate policies, programs, and practices to continue fulfilling the goals and purpose of the Specific Plan, which is to create a framework for transforming the Avenue into a multimodal corridor that 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 private investment, strengthen partnerships, enhance the public realm, promote the everyday use of transit, walking and biking, foster environmental sustainability, and add housing and commercial space. (2022 Specific Plan 1.02, p 01-2.)

Beginning in 2025, City staff worked with Strategic Economics to analyze economic and business conditions in the Plan area to assess and address changing development and market conditions. This effort resulted in the *Implementation Strategy for the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan* (Attachment 1), supported by the extensive Data Appendix ([published here](#)). Together, the documents evaluate El Cerrito's opportunities and challenges in the current economic environment and propose possible goals and strategies to continue momentum, taking into consideration City resources and capacity.

Concurrently, Strategic Economics also worked with staff to analyze the City's existing affordable housing policies and efforts to address our needs/goals while also considering the broader regional/statewide policy and funding landscape for affordable housing production. As a result, the *Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy* was developed and includes an Executive Summary (Attachment 2) supported by the Administrative Document ([published here](#)).

The combined *San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Economic Development and Affordable Housing Analysis and Implementation Strategy* fulfills the remaining grant tasks to complete and close out the grant. Staff is not requesting any action from the City Council as part of this presentation. The intent of the presentation is to share the information gathered, answer questions, and discuss any possible next steps as well as help inform other policy and program efforts.

STRATEGIC PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

This action supports the [City's 2024-29 Strategic Plan Goal\(s\)](#) of:

- *Livability and Belonging: Attract new and infill development for all income types; support businesses and economic growth; Advance the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan to create a livable, vibrant and diverse corridor.*

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

This presentation is not a project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

This report is funded by the MTC Priority Development Area Grant and does not require any additional budget appropriation.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no legal considerations for receiving this presentation.

Reviewed by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Karen Pinkos', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Karen Pinkos, City Manager

Attachments:

1. Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy Report
2. Implementation Strategy for the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Report



STRATEGIC
ECONOMICS

Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy

July 7, 2026

Table of Contents

- 1) Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy
Introduction**
- 2) Affordable Housing Need and Existing Supply**
- 3) Overview of City Actions on Affordable Housing**
- 4) Affordable Housing Policy Review**
- 5) Key Findings and Policy Considerations**

1. Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy Introduction

Strategy Background

The City initiated this Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy as part of a review of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, to support the City's Strategic Plan, and in response to a regional initiative led by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to support affordable housing production and preservation and the protection of low-income residents in transit-oriented communities.

This strategy examines El Cerrito's ability to meet its current affordable housing needs given the current development market constraints. It also reviews several policies that have potential to make an impact on achieving the City's affordable housing goals.

Elora Apartments



Source: CoStar, 2026.

El Cerrito's Housing Plans



San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan (Adopted 2014, Amended 2022)

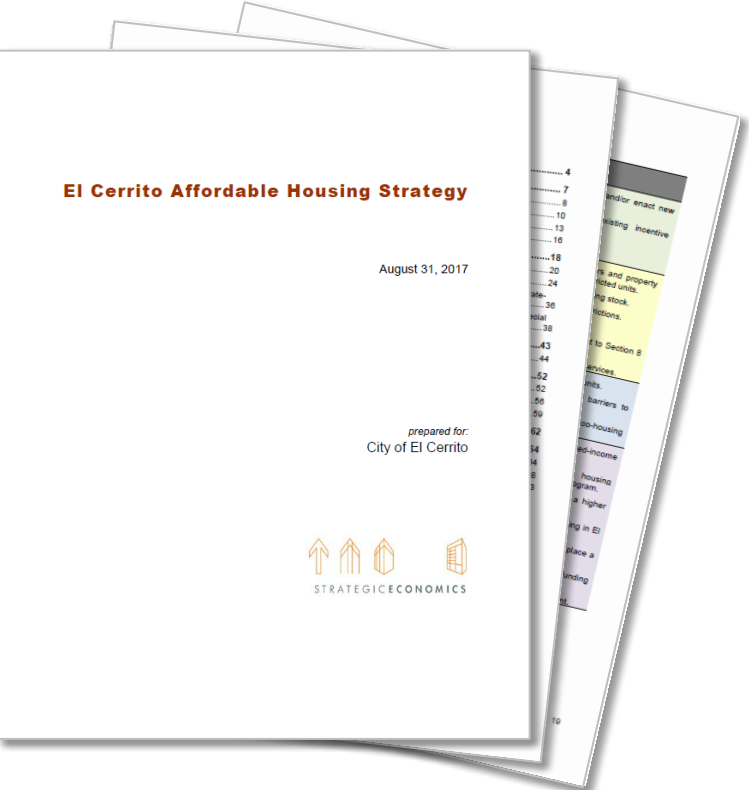
- Goal is to simulate economic activity and housing production along San Pablo Avenue to create a vibrant, multimodal corridor
- Allows residential uses in all segments of the Plan Area

El Cerrito's 2023-2031 Housing Element (Certified 2023)

- Describes how the City will meet its Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) targets for housing production by income level by 2031
- Identifies future housing development sites in the City to meet RHNA targets, 95 percent of which are in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Area

El Cerrito Affordable Housing Strategy (Adopted 2017)

- Includes strategies and implementation actions to produce and preserve affordable housing for low-income households in El Cerrito

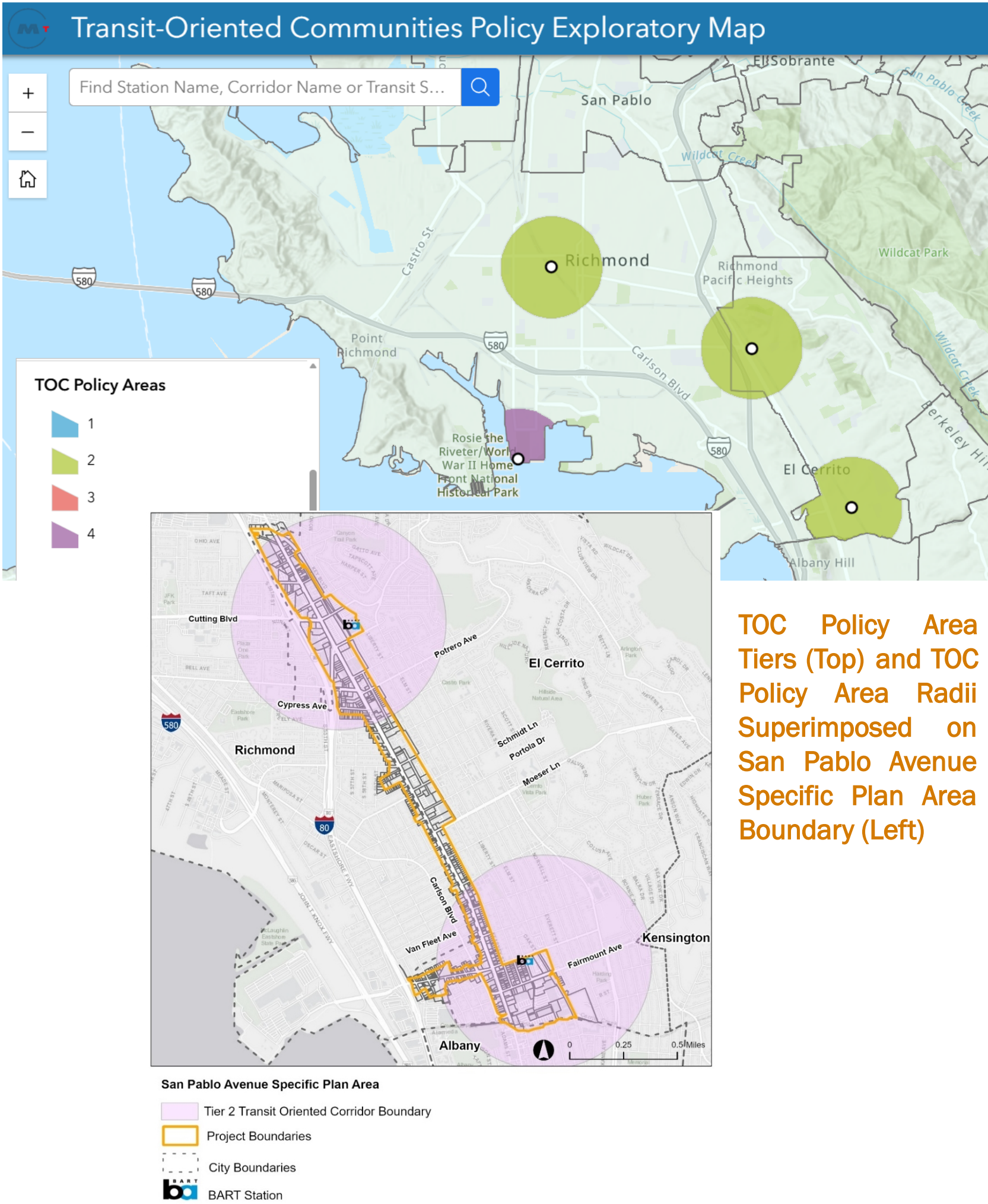


MTC TOC Policy

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission’s (MTC’s) Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC) Policy ties future One Bay Area Grant funding for cities to compliance with TOC related policies. TOC policy requirements apply to areas within one-half mile of existing or planned transit stops, requirements vary depending on the level of transit service at each stop. El Cerrito’s two BART stations are classified in the “Tier 2” based on the level of total transit service.

MTC has a three-pronged framework for addressing its affordable housing policy requirements needed near transit stations:

- 1. **Production:** Investing in the construction of new affordable homes and converting non-residential properties to residential uses
- 2. **Preservation:** Investments in existing residential buildings to prevent displacing low-income households and stabilizing communities
- 3. **Protection:** Establishing tenant protection policies and programs for low-income and moderate-income households.



TOC Policy Area Tiers (Top) and TOC Policy Area Radii Superimposed on San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Area Boundary (Left)

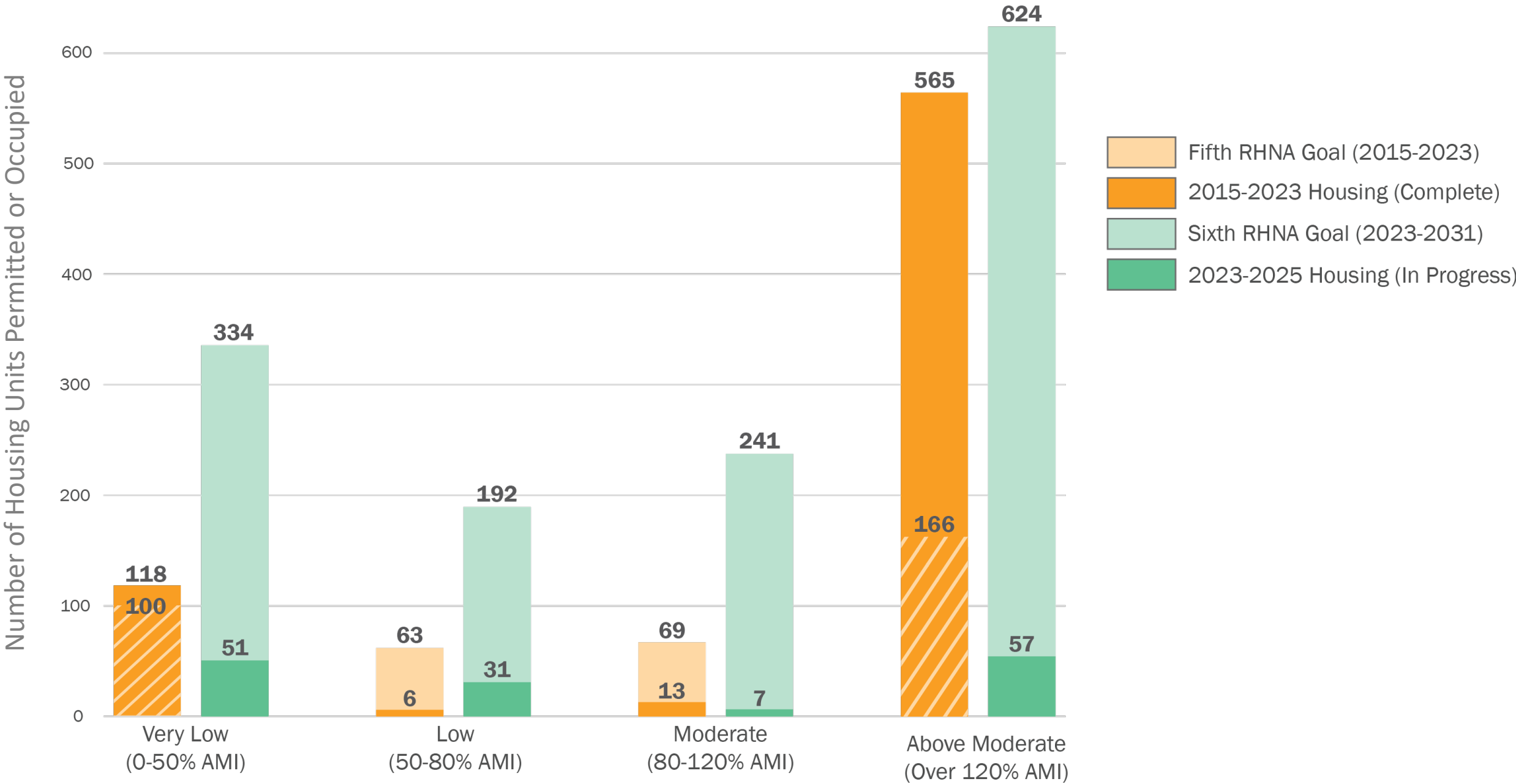
2. Affordable Housing Need and Existing Supply

El Cerrito's Regional Housing Needs Allocation Targets

The City of El Cerrito is subject to housing production goals identified through the State-mandated Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), which includes production goals by income categories for eight-year cycles. El Cerrito's Sixth Cycle housing targets are higher across all income categories than its previous Fifth Cycle targets.

The state also requires the City to adopt a Housing Element that identifies plans for meeting the RHNA housing targets during this cycle. El Cerrito's housing plan allocates 95 percent of future housing unit development to the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Area.

5th and 6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) Requirements and Progress in El Cerrito, 2015-2025



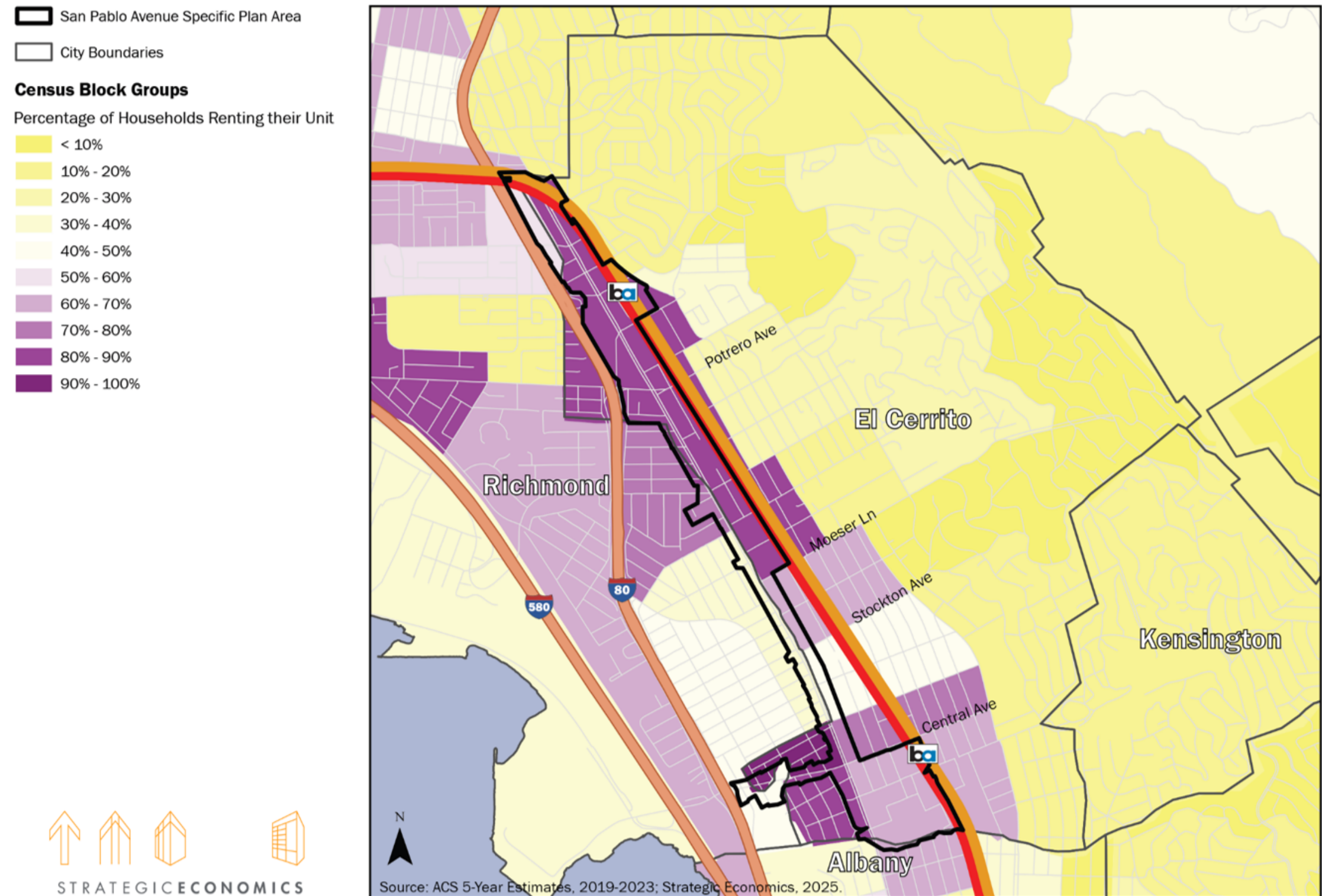
Source: California Department of Housing and Community Development, 2015-2025; Strategic Economics, 2026.

El Cerrito's Existing Rental Housing is Clustered around the BART Stations and Along San Pablo Avenue

Most renter households in El Cerrito live in census block groups along San Pablo Avenue and near the BART stations, whereas homeowners are more likely to live in the hills. Renters are more vulnerable to displacement than homeowners due to higher housing cost burdens and other factors.

In El Cerrito, approximately 46 percent of renter households are rent-burdened, or spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing, compared to 24 percent of homeowners (American Community Survey, 2019-2023). Unlike homeowners' mortgage payments, rents are subject to increase with inflation or changing market conditions. High and rising rents combined with renters' lower average incomes (as compared to homeowners) contribute to more severe housing cost burdens for renters than for the average homeowner, as is the case in El Cerrito.

Percentage of Renter Households by Census Block Group in El Cerrito, 2023

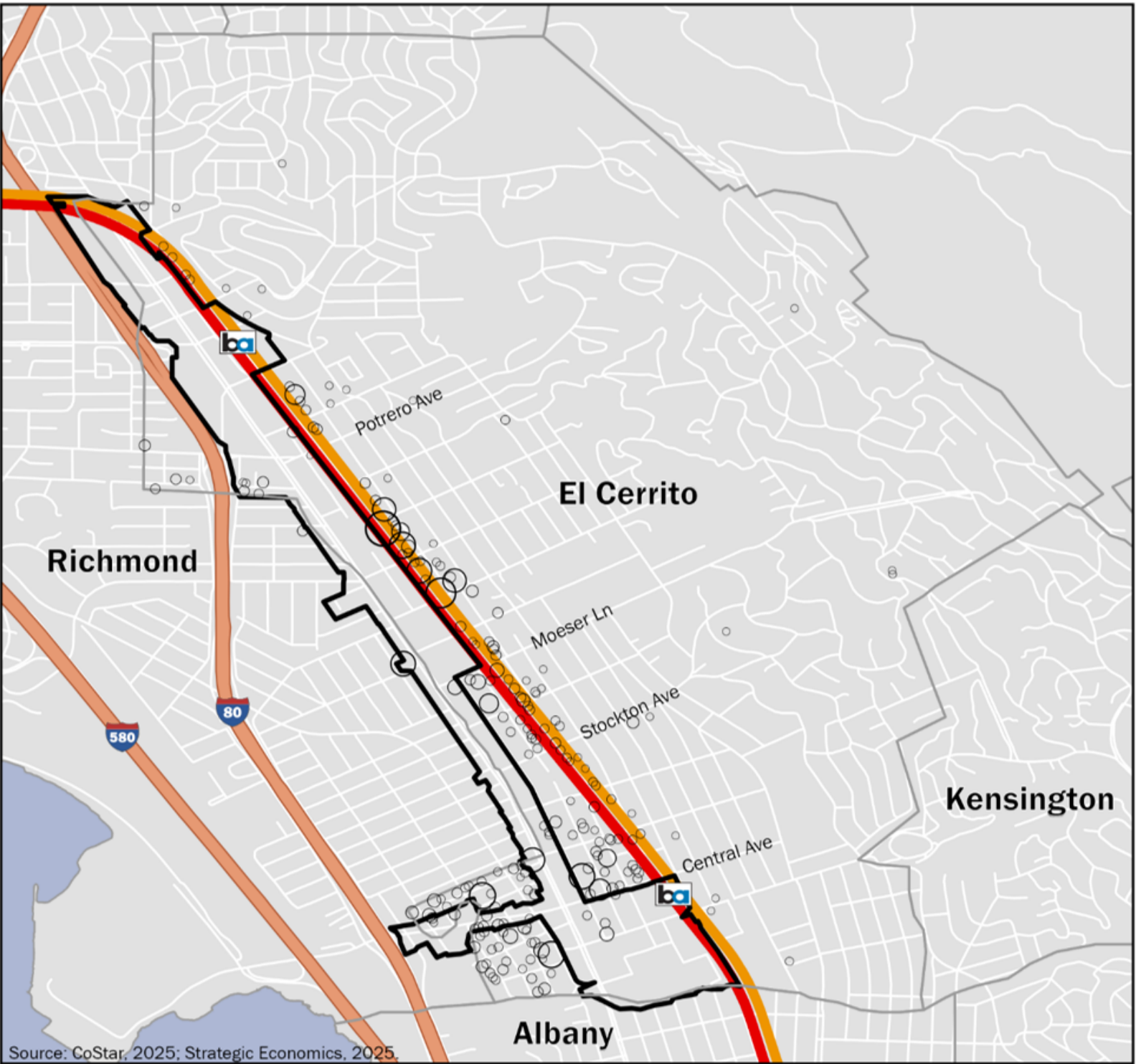
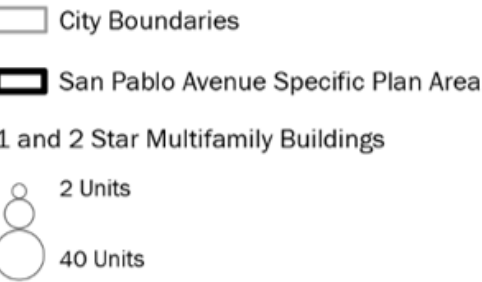


Most of the City’s Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) is Also Near BART Stations and Along San Pablo Avenue

NOAH encompasses older, privately owned, rental housing that offers lower rents compared to newer units. While these units are not deed-restricted regarding tenant income targets, they may still be affordable to lower-income households.

NOAH buildings are clustered near the BART stations and near Central Avenue west of San Pablo Avenue. The Plan Area boundaries capture an area that historically served as a commercial corridor and, as a result, much of El Cerrito’s NOAH units and rental housing generally are located immediately adjacent to, but outside of, the Plan Area. Nonetheless, most of this housing is still proximate to transit via San Pablo Avenue and/or BART.

NOAH Properties in El Cerrito, 2025 *



* NOAH Properties are buildings that are classified as 1- and 2-Star Multifamily Properties by CoStar

El Cerrito's Current Affordable Housing Inventory

In addition to its NOAH units, El Cerrito has 350 units of deed-restricted affordable housing. Deed-restricted affordable housing units are typically produced through either inclusionary units included in market rate projects that receive no public subsidy, or in 100 percent affordable housing developments that have received public subsidy. The deed restrictions identify the percent of units that must be affordable and the household income targets. Rents for deed restricted affordable units are tied to household income.

Whereas NOAH units are in neighborhoods adjacent to the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Area, almost all the City's deed-restricted housing is in the Plan Area boundaries. This area is an ideal location for affordable housing due to its competitiveness for subsidies from state affordable housing grant programs.

Deed-Restricted Affordable Housing Units in El Cerrito

Name	Address	Total Units	Income-Restricted Units	Location	Target Group	Expiration of Affordability
Hana Gardens Senior	10860 San Pablo Avenue	63	63	Plan Area	Senior Housing	2071
Metro 510	510 El Cerrito Plaza	128	19	Plan Area	Low and Moderate Incomes	2072
Ohlone Gardens	6431 Portola Drive	57	56	Plan Area	Special Needs Housing	2069
Village at Town Center	10810 San Pablo Avenue	158	24	Plan Area	Low and Moderate Incomes	2035
Del Norte Place	11720 San Pablo Avenue	135	27	Plan Area	Very Low and Low Income	2042
Hazel Shirley Manor	11025 San Pablo Avenue	63	63	Plan Area	Seniors, Mobility-Impaired Adult Housing	2031
Idaho Apartments	10203 San Pablo Avenue	29	28	Plan Area	Formerly Homeless, Disabled, Special Needs Housing	2072
1715 Elm Street	1715 Elm Street	16	2	Outside Plan Area	Moderate Income	Est. 2070
Elora Apartments	11690 San Pablo Avenue	69	68	Plan Area	Family	2081
Total		718	350			

Source: City of El Cerrito, 2025; Strategic Economics, 2025.

3. Overview of City Actions on Affordable Housing

Inclusionary Housing Policy

As recommended in the City’s Affordable Housing Strategy, El Cerrito enacted an inclusionary housing policy in 2018. The policy requires that 10 percent of housing units in otherwise market rate rental projects be affordable to low- and moderate-income households, or that 12 percent of housing units in for-sale projects be set aside for moderate-income households.

MTC TOC Policy compliance requires that 15 percent of rental and for-sale project units be affordable to low-income households.. The City could potentially comply with the TOC Policy by demonstrating that the 15 percent requirement is not financially feasible. To date, the Inclusionary Housing Policy has not resulted in the production of any affordable housing units nor generated any in-lieu fees to support affordable housing construction although several projects with inclusionary units have been entitled.

El Cerrito Inclusionary Housing Policy

Rental Projects				
Minimum Project Size	% Affordable	Affordability Target	Affordability Term	In-Lieu Fee
10 units	10%	1/ 2: Low-Income Households (80% AMI); 1/ 2: Moderate-Income Households (120% AMI)	55 years	\$21.00: May be paid for all or any portion of the inclusionary units required, including fractional units
For-Sale Projects				
Minimum Project Size	% Affordable	Affordability Target	Affordability Term	In-Lieu Fee
9 units	12%	Moderate-Income Households (120% AMI)	45 years	\$26.00: May be paid only for fractional units when the fraction is less than one-half

City Contributions to Affordable Housing Developments

EL Cerrito's recent support for affordable housing includes both funding and land contributions. However, the sites and the funds are left over from the dissolution of the City's redevelopment agency. These assets have now been expended and are not available in the future.

City funding contributions and coordination with partners also enabled El Cerrito to attract additional outside funding to affordable housing projects. The City partnered with developers to bring in over \$60 million to the Elora Apartments and El Cerrito Plaza TOD project (Infill Infrastructure Grant, Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Grant, Hope VI Main Street Grant). Additionally, the City's application to the State Prohousing Incentive Program (PIP) resulted in an additional \$620,000 for the El Cerrito Plaza BART project.

El Cerrito Plaza BART Residential Development Rendering



Challenges of Meeting Future Affordable Housing Needs Using the Inclusionary Policy or Local Funding

Inclusionary Zoning

- **No affordable housing units have been built under El Cerrito's inclusionary housing policy due to broader development feasibility challenges.** The inclusionary housing policy applies to properties issued building permits after mid-2021, by which time housing development feasibility conditions became challenging due to increased financing and construction costs and limited rent growth.
- **The City implemented temporary reductions of inclusionary/in-lieu requirements for four projects under building permit review through Project Kickstart.** This change improves project financial feasibility while still delivering in-some lieu fee revenues, albeit smaller than required by the original policy. The City believes that this reduction aligns with its climate goals, fiscal health (through increased property and sales tax revenue), and RHNA goals.

El Cerrito Affordable Housing Trust Fund

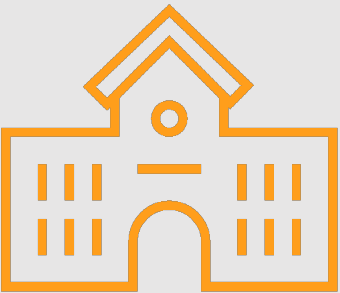
- **After contributing \$350,000 each to Elora Apartments and El Cerrito Plaza TOD, only \$95,000 remains in the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund.** This reduces the City's ability to leverage local funding towards much larger grant programs that help make affordable housing developments feasible. These funds are the residual from dissolution of the City's redevelopment agency and cannot be replaced by this source in the future.
- **Project Kickstart, which reduces in-lieu fees for residential projects under building permit review, would result in an approximately \$867,000 infusion into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.** However, the developers of these projects may still face difficulty in finding the financing sources to support their projects, even with reduced in-lieu and impact fees.

4. Potential Future Affordable Housing Policy Review

Potential Affordable Housing Policy Review

Based on needs identified in coordination with City of El Cerrito staff, Strategic Economics examined four additional potential tools to support affordable housing production and protection. El Cerrito is confronting a shortage of affordable housing funding, so three of the four tools evaluated focus on generating additional funding for the Housing Trust Fund.

The findings in this section explain how each tool or policy works, provides examples of their use, and describes applicability to El Cerrito. The examples were selected based on their ability to offer insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with each policy or tool’s use in El Cerrito.



Local Housing Bond Measures



Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District



General Fund Affordable Housing Allocations



Tenant/Community Opportunity to Purchase Act

Policy #1 – Local Housing Bond Measures

Description: Affordable housing bonds are typically structured as general obligation (GO) bonds that are backed by new property tax assessments. These bonds require approval by at least two-thirds of voters. Bond revenue can only be used for capital improvements, which includes acquisition and improvement of property for producing or preserving affordable housing.

Findings

- Countywide bond measures the most common use of GO bonds solely fund affordable housing, while cities usually bundle affordable housing with other infrastructure capital improvements in a single bond measure.
- Substantial community support is necessary to meet the two-thirds voter approval threshold required for affordable housing bond measures
- A 2016 bond measure for the Santa Cruz Public Libraries District represents an alternative approach to a GO bond by using a district-based parcel tax to support bond financing for facilities that complement and ‘unlock’ funding for affordable housing development

Jurisdictions Studied: Cities of Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco; Santa Clara and Alameda Counties; Bay Area Housing Financing Authority; Santa Cruz Libraries Community Facilities District

Lessons for El Cerrito

- As affordable housing bonds require significant public resources, the jurisdictions that initiate them are typically larger and/or more urban than El Cerrito
- El Cerrito can potentially include affordable housing funding as one of many uses for any future infrastructure and facilities bond measures
- A recent parcel tax measure in El Cerrito did not pass the necessary voter approval threshold.

Policy #2 – Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD)

Description: EIFDs are a tax increment financing tool that enable cities to issue bonds supported by future incremental growth of property tax revenues from within a specified district. Unlike General Obligation bonds, EIFD bond financing does not require voter approval. EIFD bond revenues can be used to fund affordable housing, but more often focus on infrastructure investments. Examples include investments in water/sewer infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, or parks.

Findings

- EIFDs are most effective in areas undergoing transformative change, and therefore fund improvements that support that change
- In most EIFDs, only a portion of the increased revenue gets earmarked for affordable housing development as there is no legal requirement to do so
- EIFDs can cover non-contiguous parcels that represent the most likely development opportunities within the district (even if they are not part of a unified project)

Jurisdictions Studied: Cities of Carson, Covina, Fortuna, Fresno, La Verne, Santa Rosa, Sonoma; Los Angeles, Placer, and Sonoma Counties

Lessons for El Cerrito

- An EIFD provides an opportunity for the City to dedicate property tax revenue funds for affordable housing while also making other capital improvements via streamlined bond issuance
- An EIFD could raise significantly more revenue if other local taxing entities that also receive property tax revenues contributed some portion of their share of these taxes to the district, such as the county (LA and Sonoma County have participated in local EIFDs)
- An EIFD's ability to raise revenue depends on the volume and rate of development driving incremental property tax revenue growth. Tax increment revenues of at least \$500,000 are needed to support a bond issuance
- An EIFD could create a stable and consistent funding stream for affordable housing development, but El Cerrito's relatively small size may limit total revenue collections. This would also require the City to redirect property tax revenue that would otherwise go to the General Fund
- Development down cycles are optimal times to implement an EIFD. They allow jurisdictions to capture the full upside of a market recovery when development resumes (if the right sites are selected to include in the EIFD)

Policy #3 – General Fund Revenue Allocations for Affordable Housing

Description: Some cities allocate a portion of their General Fund revenue to support affordable housing needs either on an annual basis or when surpluses exist. The General Fund is a city's primary unrestricted fund to pay for ongoing City operations and public facility maintenance. Typically, a city uses its General Fund to pay for local services, including but not limited to departments such as Police or Fire Services, Public Works, and Community Development. For non-departmental activities or financial obligations, the General Fund can transfer out revenue to other funds or uses, as would be the case if funding an Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Findings

- An ongoing commitment of General Fund resources for affordable housing provides a steady funding source, but a city council could easily change or end the funding commitment at a future date
- As an example, the City of Lafayette in Contra Costa County transfers \$215,000 annually from its General Fund to its housing fund (as of 2023)

Lessons for El Cerrito

- Ongoing dedication of General Fund revenues to fund affordable housing needs would signal El Cerrito's commitment to funding affordable housing and provide a steady source of revenue—albeit one that is easily ended via legislative action
- Retirement of the remaining financial obligations of the former Redevelopment Agency of the City of El Cerrito creates an opportunity to dedicate some or all of the restored property tax revenue to funding affordable housing needs
- However, because the City is facing a structural deficit, the City might only consider contributions to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund after all current funding needs are met and reserves are adequate levels.

Policy #4 – Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA)

Description: A TOPA is an affordable housing preservation policy designed to protect the tenants and affordability of rental housing units when they are listed for sale. TOPA provides residents of regulated properties with the opportunity to purchase their property for market value by allowing them to match the highest competing offer before it can be sold to an outside buyer. This policy allows residents to remain in their existing units and can be used to encourage alternative land tenure models such as limited equity housing cooperatives.

Findings

- San Francisco’s Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA) of 2019 exemplifies a standard TOPA policy customized to fit a local jurisdiction’s needs. The policy targets buildings with three or more residential units or vacant land that could be developed into three or more residential units
- The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) provides several strategies for strengthening TOPA requirements. As collective decision-making is difficult among tenants, a second right of refusal allows tenants who forgo their TOPA rights to assign their rights to affordable housing providers, a land trust, or nonprofit organization

Lessons for El Cerrito

- As most of El Cerrito’s NOAH housing lies outside the Plan Area, a TOPA policy would be most effective if adopted for the whole City and complemented by tenant support resources
- El Cerrito can tailor a potential TOPA policy to consider specific housing types and constituencies. The City of El Cerrito could apply TOPA specifically to properties with more than four or eight units to reduce these challenges for “mom and pop” landlords. However, building consensus among tenants for taking action becomes more difficult with more housing units
- The MTC TOC Policy lists a TOPA as one policy towards compliance with the goal of affordable housing preservation

5. Key Findings and Policy Considerations

Affordable Housing Takeaways

1. All existing affordable housing projects built in El Cerrito required Redevelopment Agency/Housing Trust Fund support, which no longer exists.
2. El Cerrito will need to identify and adopt new funding mechanisms to produce affordable housing now that its Affordable Housing Trust Fund is **nearly** depleted.
3. Current development conditions limit the short-term efficacy of affordable housing funding/production measures that rely on market-rate development activity (inclusionary housing).
4. Market-rate housing development can contribute to the City's Trust Fund by option to pay lieu fees to comply with the inclusionary housing policy. Temporary adjustments to the City's Inclusionary Housing requirements (such as Project Kickstart) should be considered across the City.

Key Policy Considerations

1. El Cerrito has very limited policy options to increase its affordable housing supply
2. The three funding-related policy options would either require increasing local taxes or allocating General Fund revenues to affordable housing production rather than other core City needs.
3. The City could adopt housing preservation and tenant protection measure to conform with the MTC TOC Policy; including a TOPA policy.
4. The City could decide not to adopt any of these policies which could include foregoing the opportunity to apply for OBAG funds.

5. Access to the Full Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy

Full Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy Report

The full Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy Report can be found under separate cover available at City Hall and [here](https://elcerrito.gov/AffordableHousingStrategy) at elcerrito.gov/AffordableHousingStrategy on the City of El Cerrito's Website



STRATEGIC
ECONOMICS

Implementation Strategy for the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

July 7, 2026

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1) Implementation Strategy Introduction

**2) Overview of Conditions Impacting
Implementation Opportunities and Challenges**

3) Implementation Strategies

4) Data Appendix

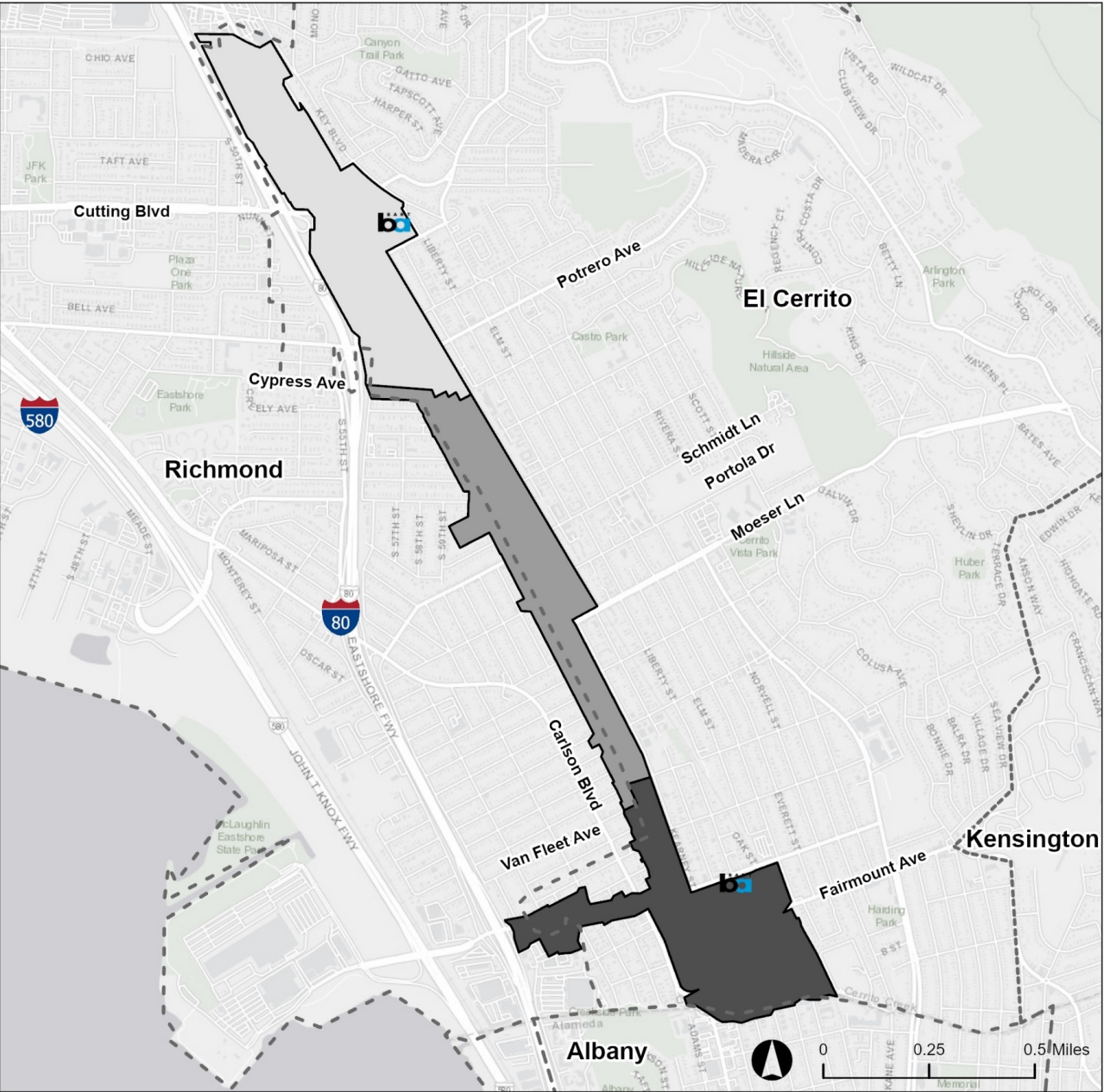
1. Implementation Strategy Introduction

Specific Plan Background

The City of El Cerrito originally adopted the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan in 2014 as a framework for transforming the corridor. The Specific Plan focuses on transforming San Pablo Avenue into a multimodal corridor that supports living, working, and community life by enhancing the public realm, attracting investment, adding housing and commercial space, and promoting use of transit, walking, and biking.

A 2022 update to the Specific Plan refined its vision, goals, and policies supporting development and investment. The 2014 Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) analyzed a development capacity of 1,706 new housing units. With the success of the Specific Plan, 1,500 housing units had been entitled by 2018. With Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) grant funding, the 2022 plan update was initiated in 2019 to facilitate the continued successful implementation of the plan.

While the City’s plan applies only to parcels within El Cerrito’s boundaries, the corridor includes parcels in the City of Richmond on the west side, especially in the “Midtown” subarea. Richmond’s plans, including their General Plan, Livable Corridors Form-Based Code, and other policies, are compatible and supportive of the City’s goals and vision.



San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Area by Subarea

- Subarea Boundaries
 - Uptown
 - Midtown
 - Downtown
- City Boundaries
- BART Station



Sources: City of El Cerrito, 2024; Strategic Economics, 2025.

Implementation Strategy Purpose

This Implementation Strategy will assist the City of El Cerrito's ongoing efforts to fulfill the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan vision, goals, and mission. Policy recommendations in the Implementation Strategy will advance the goals identified in the Specific Plan and other policy documents such as the El Cerrito Housing Element, Affordable Housing Strategy, and Strategic Plan.

The City of El Cerrito prepared the Implementation Strategy to assess and address changing development and market conditions. The Implementation Strategy addresses shifts in development and market conditions since the early-2020s COVID-19 pandemic.

Technical analyses and stakeholder interviews informed the Implementation Strategy's findings and recommendations. Stakeholder interviews included nine one-on-one interviews with local property and business owners, developers, and real estate brokers. A concurrent process supported preparation of an affordable housing strategy for the Plan Area.

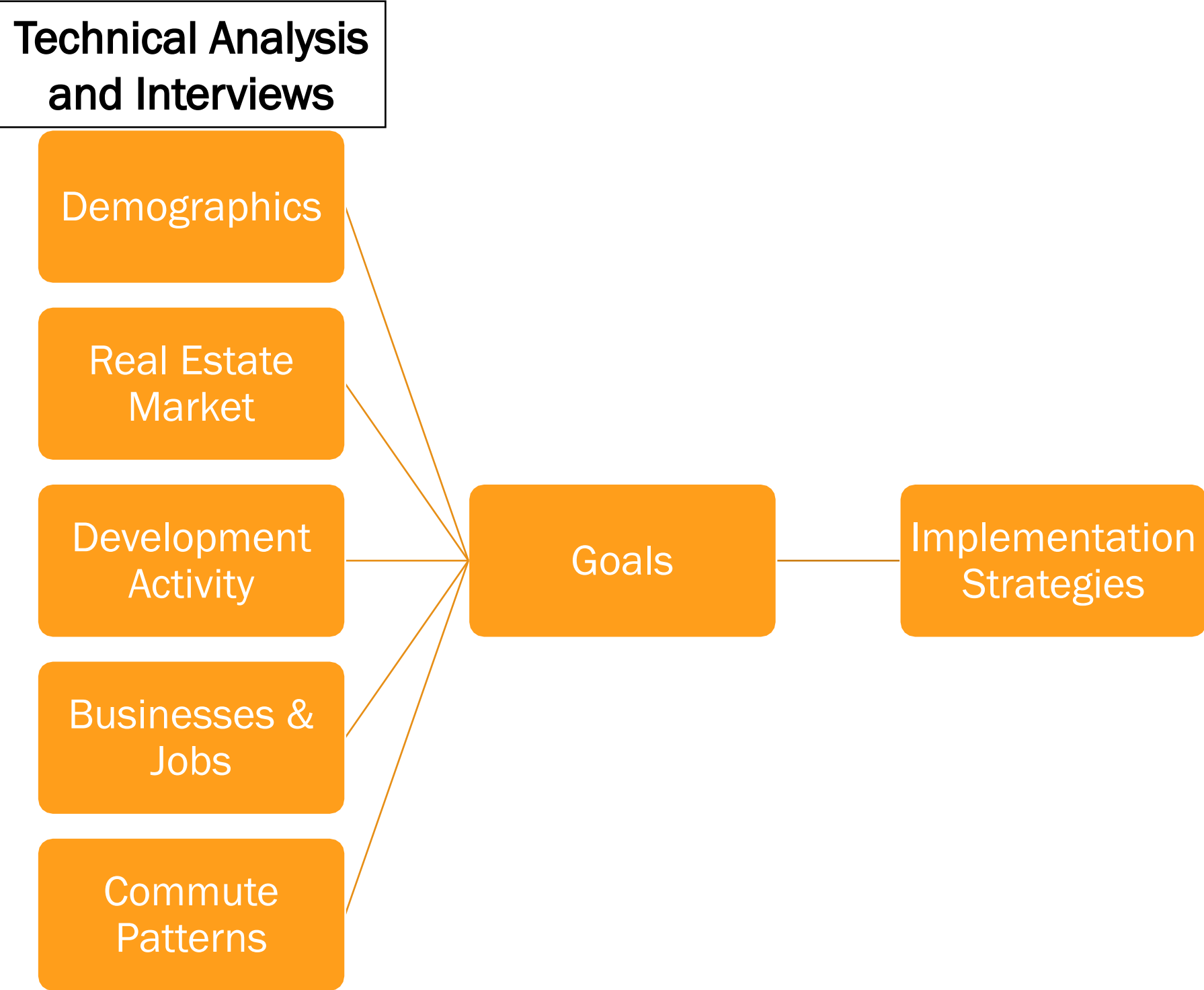
San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan's Goals:

1. Enliven San Pablo Avenue
2. Encourage Practical and Market Friendly Development
3. Support Climate Action Goals
4. Create Housing that Supports a Diverse Population

Implementation Strategy Development

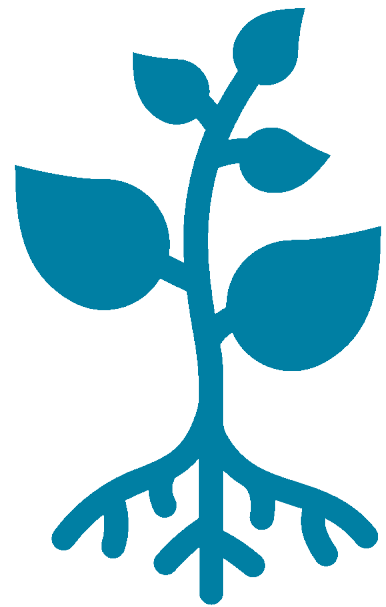
Development of the Implementation Strategy included the following steps:

- 1. Technical analyses and stakeholder interviews to identify the Plan Area’s opportunities and challenges for businesses and development opportunities.
- 2. Development of goals and strategies that respond directly to Specific Plan goals while also addressing opportunities and challenges for the corridor and considering City resources and capacity.



**The technical appendix provides detailed technical analysis data analyzed as part of developing the Implementation Strategy.*

Implementation Strategy Contents



Overview of Conditions Impacting Implementation Opportunities and Challenges

- Successes in the Plan Area
- Shifts in broader economic and development conditions
- Roles of the Specific Plan and Implementation Strategy to address challenges and opportunities



Implementation Strategies

- Implementation Strategy approach and goals
- Implementation strategies

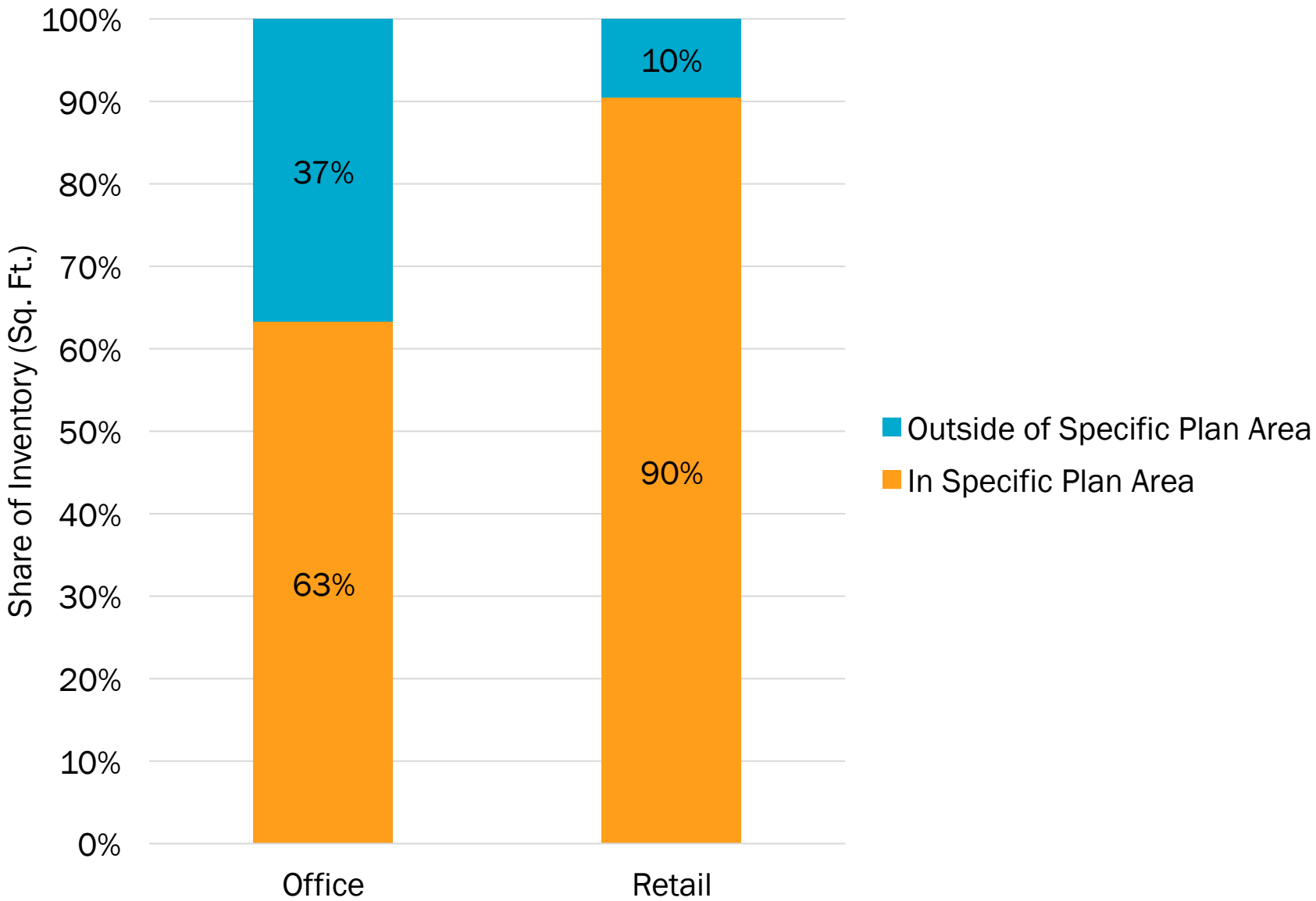
2. Overview of Conditions Impacting Implementation Opportunities and Challenges

Importance of the Plan Area for El Cerrito's Residents, Economy, and Fiscal Health

The Plan Area serves multiple roles:

- Includes more than 60 percent of citywide office space and 90 percent of retail space.
- Includes local-serving businesses and major regional retail destinations such as El Cerrito Plaza and the City's automobile dealerships.
- Generates a significant share of the City's sales and property tax revenues, supporting overall fiscal health.
- Contains most of El Cerrito's key opportunity sites for future residential and mixed-use development.
- Connects to regional employment destinations via I-80, two BART stations, AC Transit, and San Pablo Avenue.

Share of Citywide Office and Retail Inventory (square feet) within Specific Plan Area Boundaries, 2026



Source: CoStar, 2026; Strategic Economics, 2026.

Successes Since the Specific Plan Adoption

The Plan Area achieved numerous successes in attracting development activity, investment, and retail sales since the Specific Plan's adoption in 2014, including:

- Delivered 400 market rate, affordable and mixed-use housing units across multiple projects, contributing to a 20 percent increase in citywide multifamily rental housing units from 2015 to 2025 (based on data tracked by CoStar).
- Significant Transit Oriented Development (TOD) pipeline advancing, including 743 entitled units at the El Cerrito Plaza BART (Phase 1 under construction).
- High occupancy and leasing interest for new development like Mayfair Station (96% occupancy rate) and recently completed sale of the Cerrito Vista (93% occupancy rate) apartment building for \$358,490 per unit.
- Public and private investment improving the public realm, including street frontages, public art, and Del Norte Complete Streets.
- Strong overall retail performance, with full recovery of inflation-adjusted sales tax revenues since 2020 lows.
- Implementation of programs and policies to support small businesses including Makers Faire, Flavor Fest, and regulatory changes supporting outdoor dining and food trucks.



Source: Cerrito Vista, 2026.

Recently Built and Under Construction Projects in the Plan Area



Cerrito Vista: 10963 San Pablo Avenue
50 Apartments
Completed Spring 2021



1717 Elm Street:
14 Units (2 BMR)
Completed Fall 2025



Credence: 10300 San Pablo Avenue
32 Condominiums
Completed Summer 2021



Elora Apartments: 11690 San Pablo Avenue
69 affordable units
Completed Spring 2026

Mayfair: 11600 San Pablo Avenue
156 Apartments
Completed Fall 2022

El Cerrito Plaza BART TOD, Phase I: 515 Richmond Street
70 affordable units
Under Construction



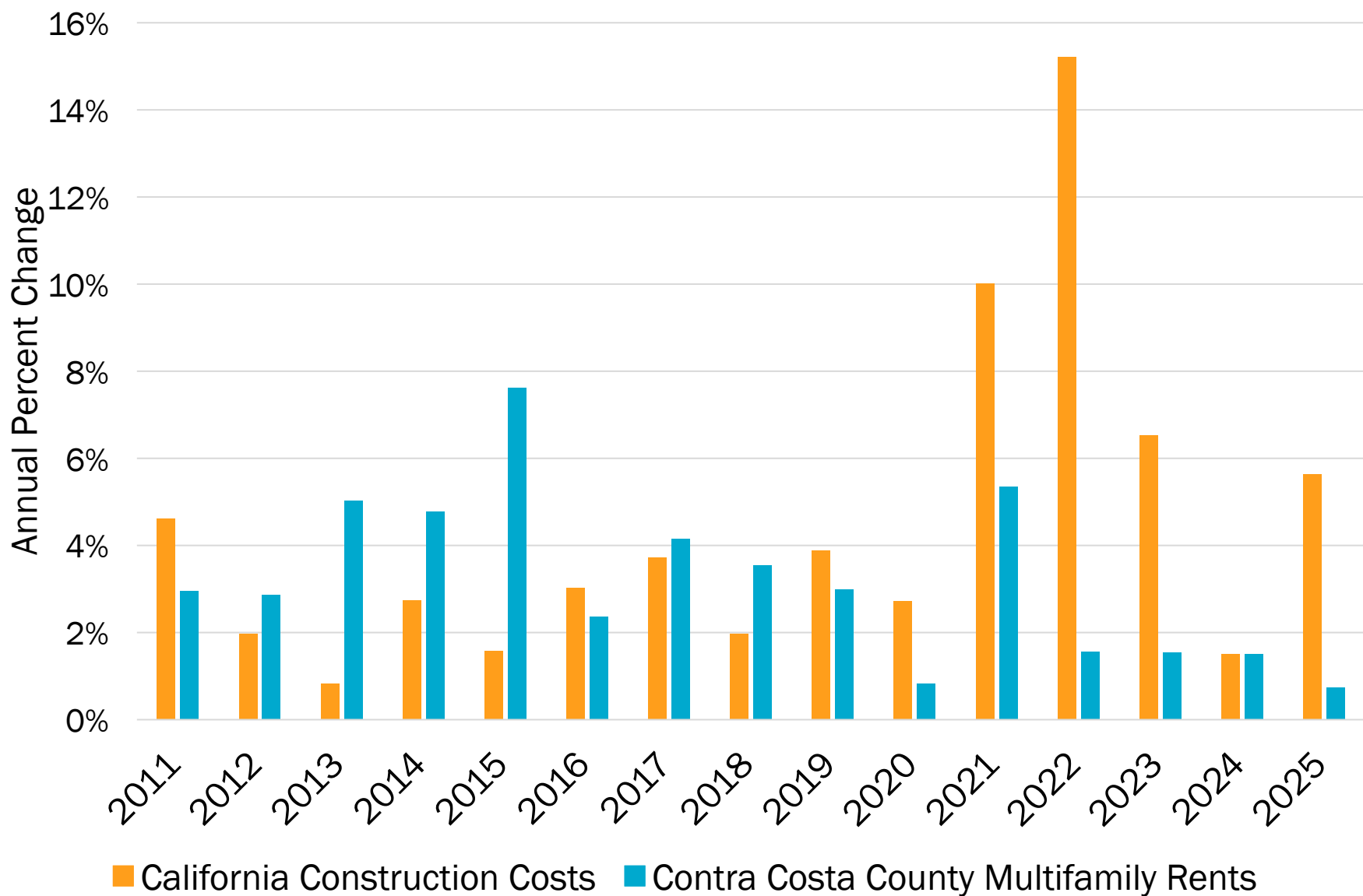
Regional Economic Conditions Affecting Local Development Feasibility

Construction and financing costs have increased significantly, outpacing rent growth and making multifamily development more difficult to finance even in strong infill locations. These conditions are directly affecting development feasibility in El Cerrito.

Hotel development in Contra Costa County and much of the region has also slowed significantly since 2021 due to declines in demand. Hotel demand is still recovering due to declines in business travel and slow growth in major conferences. Contra Costa County hotel occupancy rates declined from 80% to 64% between 2016 and 2025.

Transit usage patterns have shifted, with lower post-pandemic BART ridership and increased hybrid work affecting location preferences and moderating the pricing advantage of transit-adjacent sites compared to pre-pandemic conditions.

Change in California Statewide Construction Cost Index Versus Contra Costa County Multifamily Housing Rent Growth, 2011 to 2025



Source: California Department of General Services, 2025; CoStar, 2025; Strategic Economics, 2025.

3. Implementation Strategies

Approach Reflected in the Implementation Goals and Strategies

The implementation goals and strategies are grounded in five key ideas:

1. **Build on the City of El Cerrito's existing efforts:** The goals and strategies build on the City of El Cerrito's new/existing policies and programs supporting the Plan Area, such as development incentives adopted through "Project Kickstart" in late-2025 and adoption of a permanent Outdoor Dining Ordinance.
2. **Consider the City of El Cerrito's available resources:** As a community of approximately 26,000 residents, El Cerrito's economic development-related functions are spread across City staff with multiple responsibilities. The goals and strategies seek to leverage partners and resource-efficient opportunities.
3. **"Set the stage" for investment and growth:** There are no easy fixes to accelerate investment and development activity during a broader downturn in development activity. Instead, the current moment is an opportunity to position the Plan Area to leverage available short-term opportunities while otherwise positioning the Plan Area for enhanced success as conditions improve.
4. **"Stay the course" for the Specific Plan's vision:** The Specific Plan's vision remains sound, with the Plan Area evolving as a vibrant and accessible residential area and community destination. Efforts to attract business growth and development should balance any short-term opportunities with the imperative to fulfill the Specific Plan's vision.
5. **Focus on factors within the City's control:** The City of El Cerrito can pursue policies and programs that provide resources and amenities, build partnerships and communication, and reduce constraints on businesses and development. The City cannot, however, control broader economic trends and market conditions or directly influence private property owners.

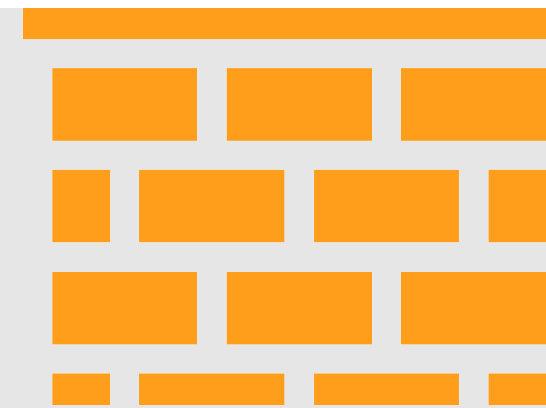
Implementation Strategy Goals



Support Existing and Potential Small Businesses in the Plan Area



Activate and Reposition Vacant and Underutilized Smaller Retail Spaces



Support Ongoing Occupancy of Large-Scale Retail Space



Incentivize and Encourage Development

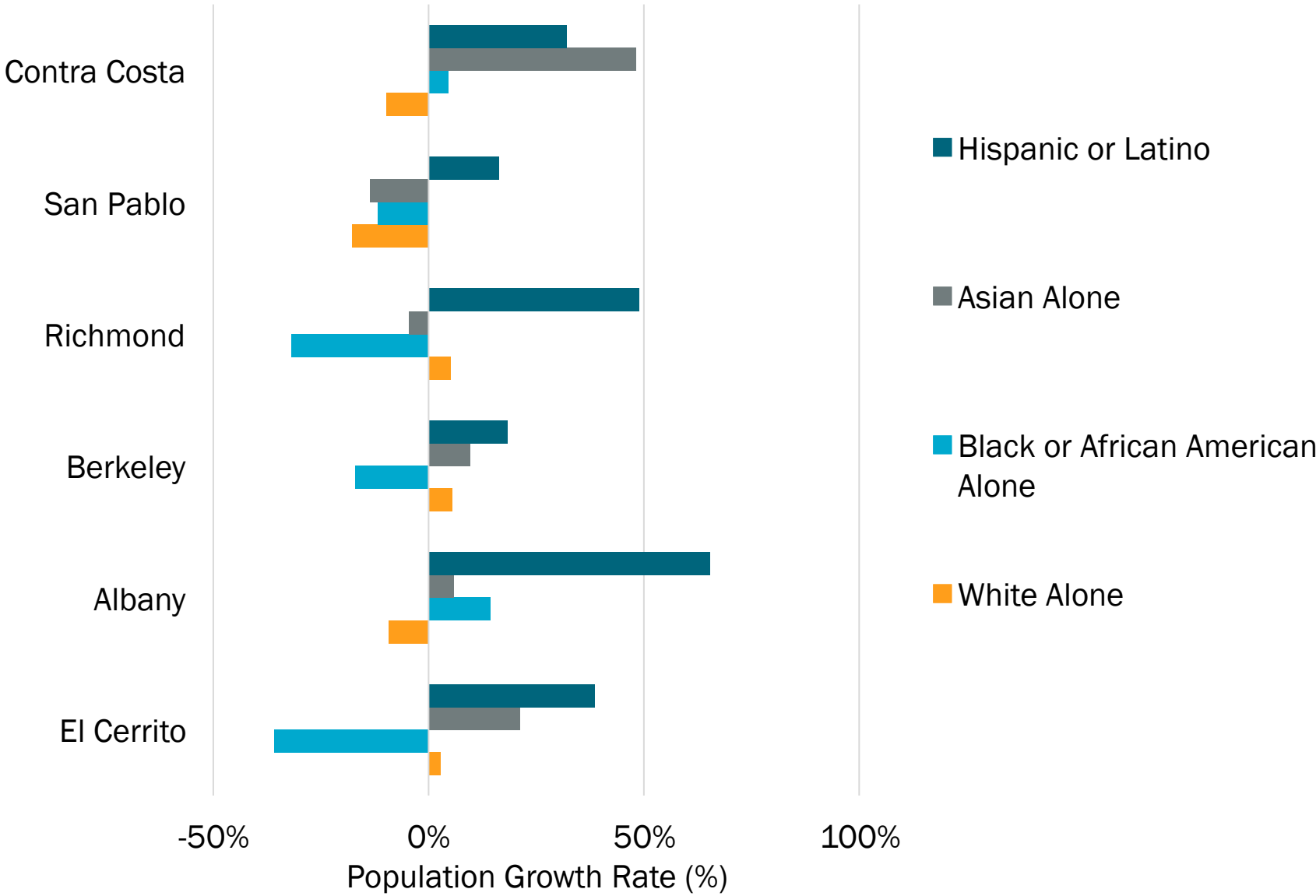
Goal #1 – Support Existing and Potential Small Businesses in the Plan Area

Relevant Existing Conditions

The Plan Area is well positioned to serve a diverse surrounding customer base. Nearly 45 percent of El Cerrito’s population identified as either Asian or Latino in 2023. Both racial or ethnic groups have grown substantially in the city since 2010. The diversity and ongoing growth of Latino and Asian residents in El Cerrito and the surrounding communities can create potential to capture demand for a diversity of small business and entrepreneurship.

The corridor’s diverse mix of international grocers, restaurants, and services is a key assets that draws customers from across the subregion.

Population Growth Rate by Race and Ethnicity, 2010 to 2023



Source: U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Estimate, 2010, 2023; Strategic Economics, 2025.

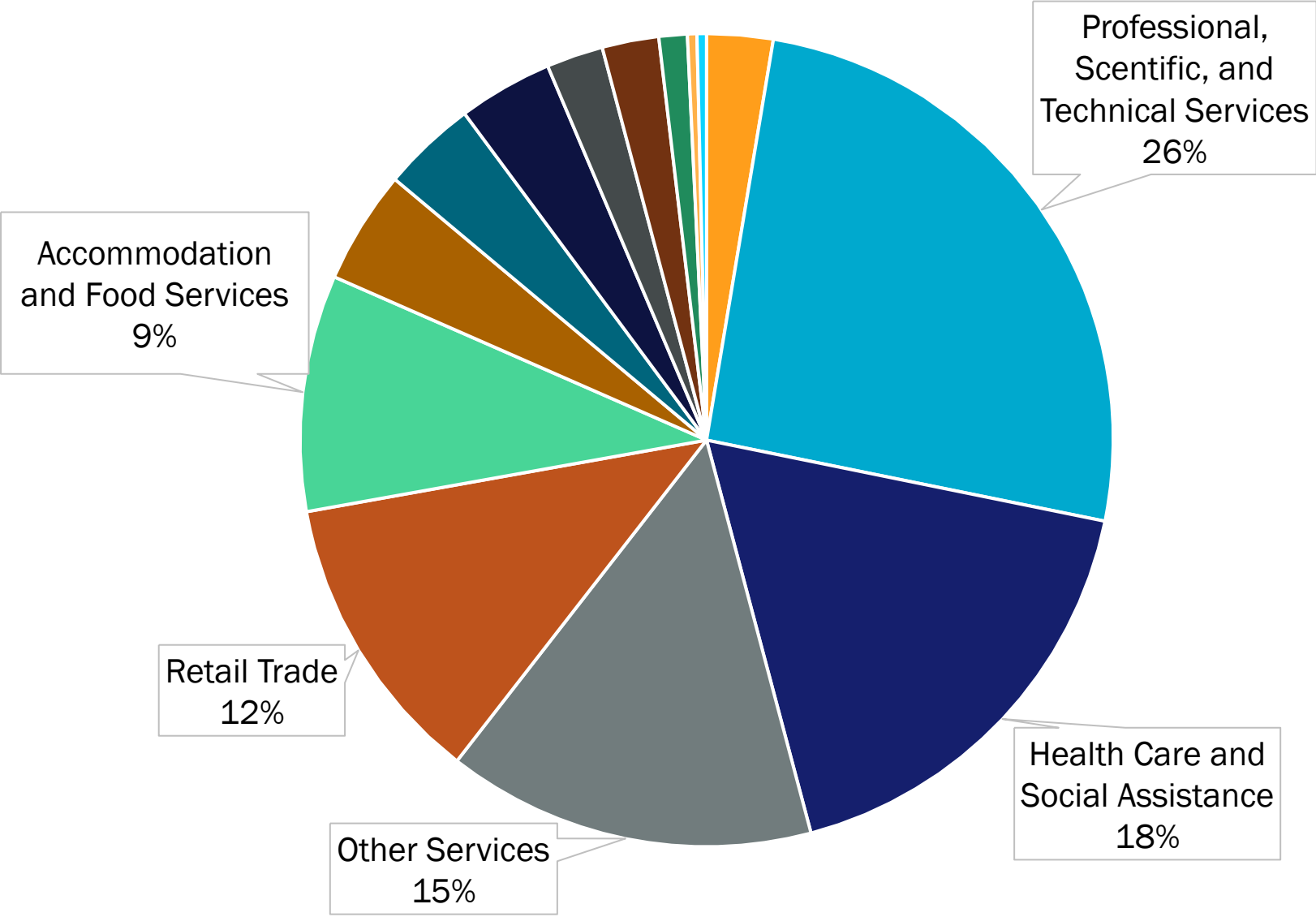
Goal #1 – Support Existing and Potential Small Businesses in the Plan Area

Relevant Existing Conditions

El Cerrito is home to a mix of home-based entrepreneurs that could potentially expand to brick-and-mortar space. Approximately 15 percent of the over 320 home occupation business permit holders in El Cerrito run micro-enterprises that sell handmade goods, food, and personal services like legal, health, and fitness guidance. The winter and summer Makers Fairs provide visibility and help foster connections and sales for these home-based enterprises.

El Cerrito’s recent adoption of a permanent Outdoor Dining Ordinance enables greater flexibility for small businesses to serve their customers. The ordinance clarifies and removes constraints on flexible options for businesses to prepare food and serve customers in outdoor areas—expanding potential revenues.

El Cerrito Home Occupation Permits Issued Since 2020, Largest Industry Sectors



Source: City of El Cerrito, 2025; Strategic Economics, 2025.

Goal #1 – Support Existing and Potential Small Businesses in the Plan Area

Relevant Existing Conditions

Much of the Plan area consists of older, small-scale retail spaces that require significant tenant improvements to meet new business needs. Although local brokers note that smaller and older retail spaces provide an affordable option for new small businesses, the required tenant improvement costs can pose an obstacle to businesses seeking to start or expand.

Thirty-six percent of the Plan Area’s retail space is classified as “Class C” space by CoStar as of 2026, reflecting lower quality buildings with relatively low rents.

Retail activity is historically dispersed along the corridor, which reduces foot traffic. The Specific Plan’s emphasis on nodes and new housing will increase foot traffic over time.

Many businesses rely on curbside access. Although some businesses are in retail centers with off-street parking, many rely on curbside access for customer parking, pick up/drop off, and deliveries (including app-based services).

Future multimodal improvements, including potential Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), will enhance access to the corridor, while requiring thoughtful curb and parking management to support business operations, customer access, and deliveries—which since the pandemic often represent a greater share of sales.



Source: City of El Cerrito, 2026.

Goal #1 – Support Existing and Potential Small Businesses in the Plan Area

Implementation Strategies

Strategy 1.1 – Provide targeted support for small and emerging businesses, including home-based, maker, personal service, and diverse business owners through improved information, navigation, and access to City and regional programs.

Strategy 1.2 – Strengthen and promote the corridor as a diverse food and retail destination, building on successful events such as Flavor Fest and increasing the visibility of international grocers, restaurants, and local-serving businesses.

Strategy 1.3 – Maintain and expand flexibility in zoning and land use standards to support a diverse variety and range of small business types and uses, including shared spaces, outdoor dining, maker, temporary / pop-up uses, and multi-tenant configurations.

Strategy 1.4 – Address tenant improvement (TI) barriers in older retail spaces, exploring small grants, façade programs or partnerships to support reinvestment, repositioning, and occupancy.

Strategy 1.5 – Implement a proactive curb and access management approach to balance business needs—including customer access, pick up/drop off, and deliveries—with multimodal improvements over time.

Goal #2 – Activate and Reposition Vacant and Underutilized Smaller Retail Spaces

Relevant Existing Conditions

Vacancy is limited but highly visible with clusters of smaller vacant storefronts concentrated in Midtown and select blocks along the corridor. Overall retail vacancy remains within a healthy range (~10%).

Not all vacancies are the same, as:

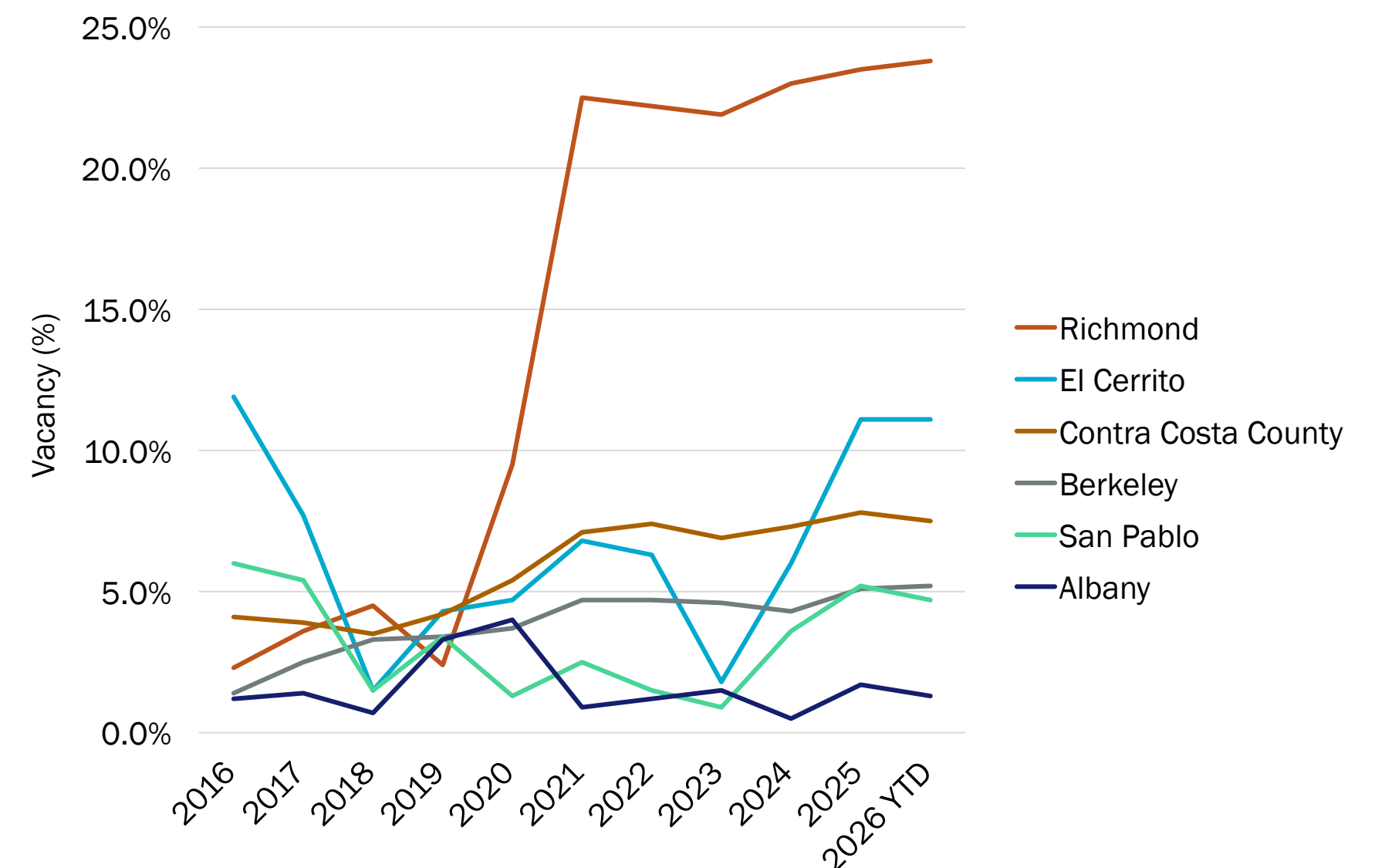
- some spaces are **actively marketed and turn over relatively quickly**
- others are **held or marketed for future redevelopment** or have limited owner interest in leasing, contributing to prolonged visible vacancies

The Plan Area envisions more walkable businesses in several primary nodes. However, due to existing land use patterns and ownerships, businesses continue to be spread out.

Retail activity is concentrated in a few key nodes. Outside these nodes, dispersed storefronts are more difficult to lease, as businesses rely more on destination trips than walk-by customers.

Low achievable rents and older building conditions reduce incentives for reinvestment, contributing to ongoing visible vacancy.

Retail Vacancy Rate (Percent of Square Feet), 2016 to 2026



Note: Recent increases in El Cerrito's retail vacancy rate are primarily attributable to vacated locations of Marshall's and Joann Fabric and Crafts.

Source: CoStar, 2026; Strategic Economics, 2026.

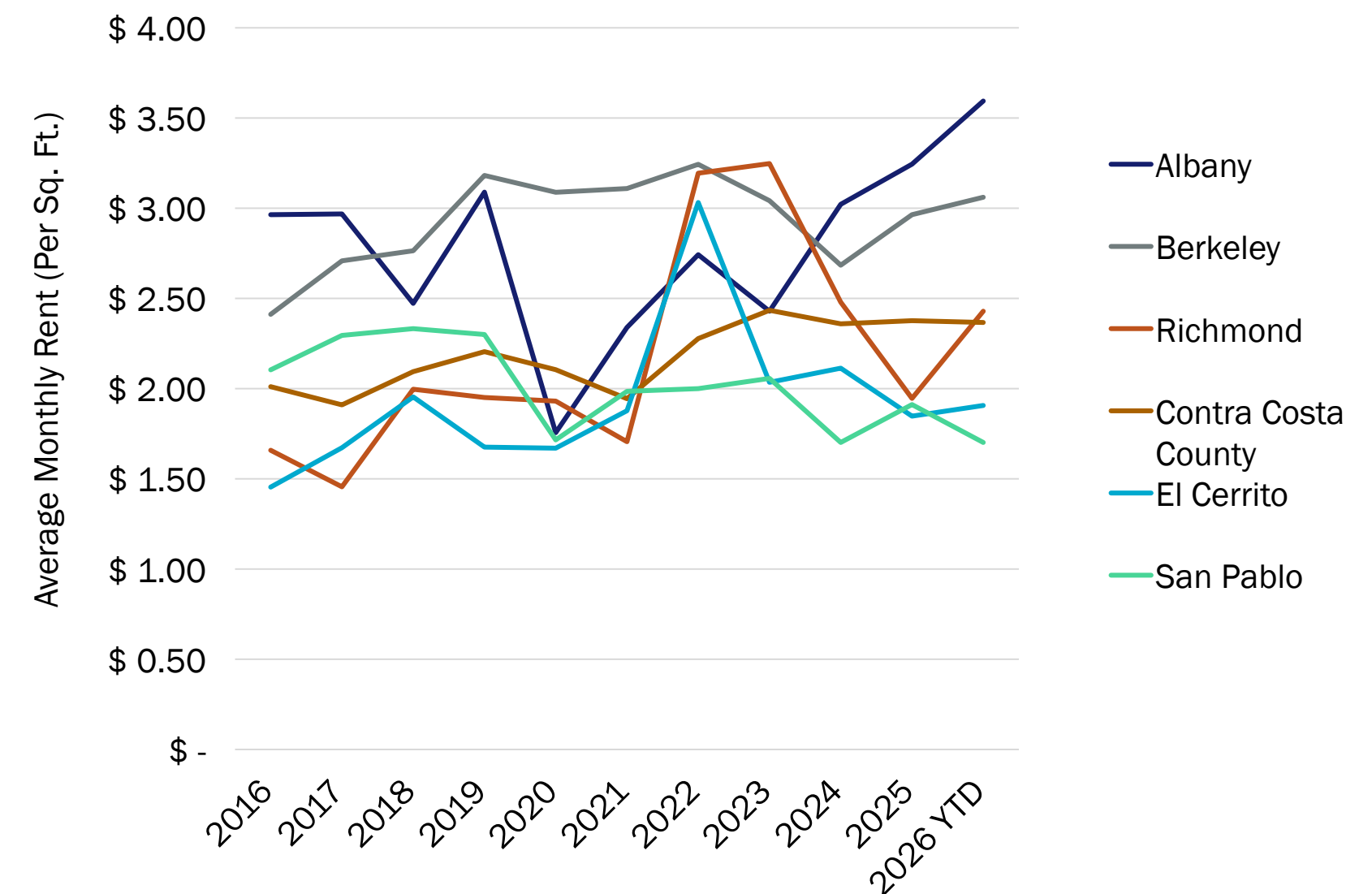
Goal #2 – Activate and Reposition Vacant and Underutilized Smaller Retail Spaces

Relevant Existing Conditions

Relatively low achievable retail rents in older and lower quality retail space creates little incentive for property owners to significantly invest in maintaining properties. El Cerrito commands one of the lowest overall average retail rent rates among nearby communities. While lower rents can benefit some small businesses (unless they need to significantly improve their space), low rents create a disincentive for owners to reinvest in their buildings.

Opportunities exist to amplify local efforts to improve and fill vacant retail spaces through coordination and collaboration with the City of Richmond. Given that a portion of the western Plan Area sits within the City of Richmond, opportunities exist to continue partnerships and coordination regarding policies, regulation, business support, and code enforcement. The sidewalks in front of the businesses in Richmond are generally located in El Cerrito, so outdoor dining policies and overall multimodal improvements benefit both sides of the corridor.

Average Retail Monthly Rent (Per Sq. Ft.), 2016 to 2026



Source: CoStar, 2026; Strategic Economics, 2026.

Goal #2 – Activate and Reposition Vacant and Underutilized Smaller Retail Spaces

Implementation Strategies

Strategy 2.1 - Partner with a local real estate broker or specialist to conduct targeted outreach to property owners and brokers, focusing on identifying barriers to leasing, redevelopment or reinvestment.

Strategy 2.2 – Prioritize activation and reinvestment in key nodes, focusing resources where clustering can increase foot traffic, improve visibility, and support business success. Demonstrate the value of reinvestment and redevelopment of disinvested and vacant retail space to property owners as part of outreach efforts. Examples include sharing local case studies of improved owner revenues through reinvestment and raising awareness of potential redevelopment opportunities enabled by local zoning.

Strategy 2.3 – Maintain active code enforcement and property standards, particularly in areas of visible vacancy.

Strategy 2.4 – Through local partnerships, such as with property and business owners and the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce, facilitate reinvestment and beautification efforts of both active and vacant storefronts (façade improvement, public art, etc.) throughout the Plan Area.



Source: City of El Cerrito, 2026.

Goal #3 – Support Ongoing Occupancy of Large-Scale Retail Space

Relevant Existing Conditions

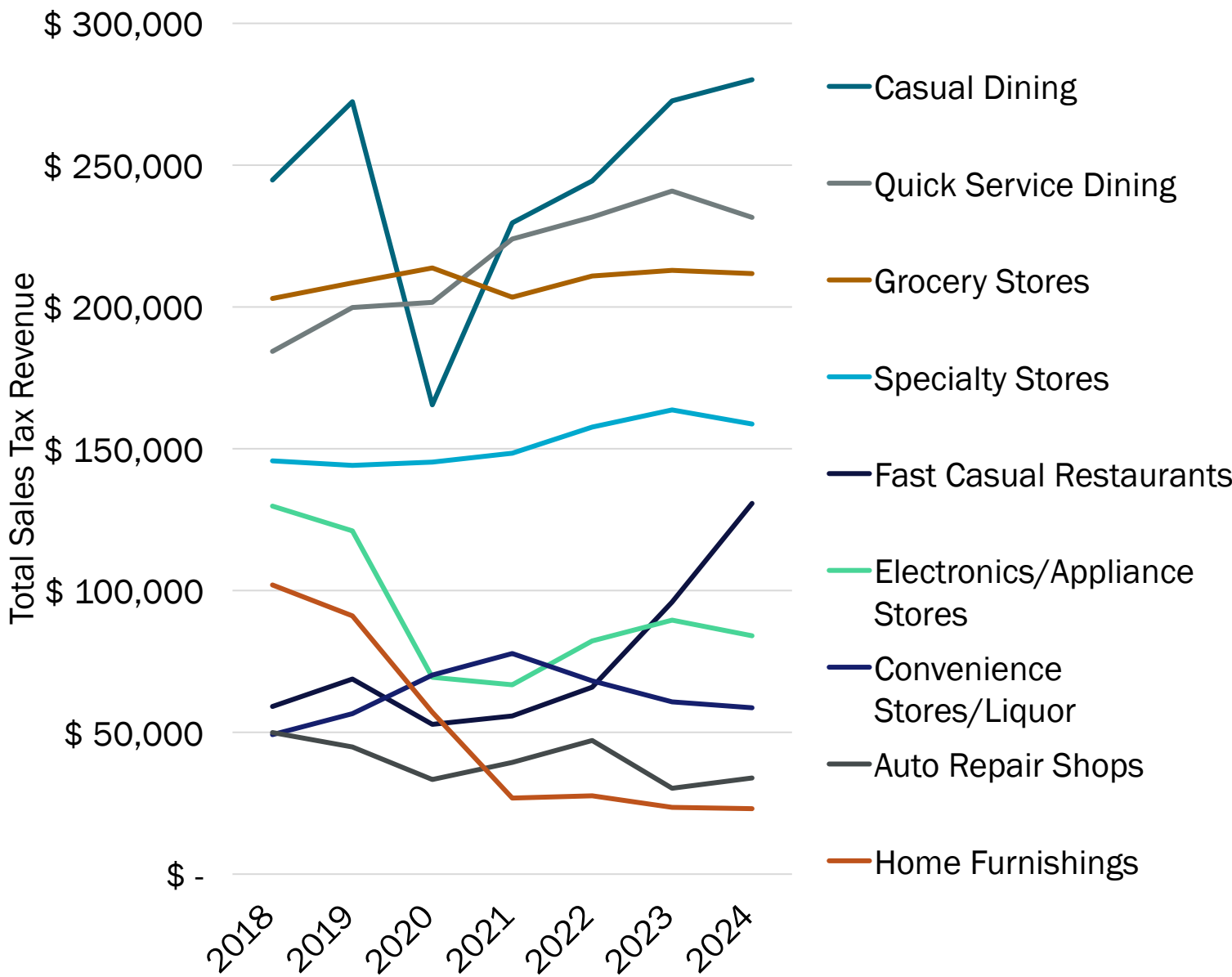
Broader retail trends towards e-commerce and away from “big box” formats will require ongoing repositioning of larger vacant spaces. Online sales compete most directly with hard and soft goods that are easily shipped and often purchased based on value. As a result, the mix of prospective tenants for large-scale retail space now includes more entertainment, recreational, and dining uses. Recent leasing of the former Barnes & Noble space to Crunch Fitness reflects this shift in demand. The rapid growth of dining and restaurants in El Cerrito’s sales tax revenues also reflects this industrywide shift toward “experiential” businesses.

The Plan Area includes a limited number of large-scale vacant retail spaces, including the former locations of Joann Fabrics in El Cerrito Plaza and a former Marshalls (10794 San Pablo Avenue).

Tenancing and redevelopment of larger retail spaces can be constrained by CC&Rs (conditions, covenants, and restrictions) in shopping centers which may limit allowable uses, parking, visibility requirements, redevelopment and other factors that control changes to tenants and design of shopping centers.

Some sites represent long-term opportunities for repositioning or redevelopment, but may require interim occupancy, adaptive reuse, or phased strategies before full buildout becomes feasible.

El Cerrito Sales Tax Revenue by Business Type, 2018 to 2024



Note: Excludes business-to-business categories and categories that do not meet legal requirements for disclosure.
Source: HdL, 2025; Strategic Economics, 2025.

Goal #3 – Support Ongoing Occupancy of Large-Scale Retail Space

Implementation Strategies

Strategy 3.1 - Continue to monitor and evaluate the health of retail centers throughout the Plan Area through analysis of sales tax data, market data, and broker engagement.

Strategy 3.2 – Support near term activation of large retail spaces. Encourage subdivision, multi-tenant reuse, and alternative commercial uses (fitness, entertainment, grocery, dining) to maintain occupancy.

Strategy 3.3 - Engage with shopping center property owners to understand their goals and discuss possibilities for repositioning of vacant or underutilized retail space. Implement this effort via the real estate broker or economic development specialist identified in Strategy 2.1.

Vacant Large-Scale Retail Space



Source: Google Maps, 2026.

Goal #4 – Incentivize and Encourage Development

Relevant Existing Conditions

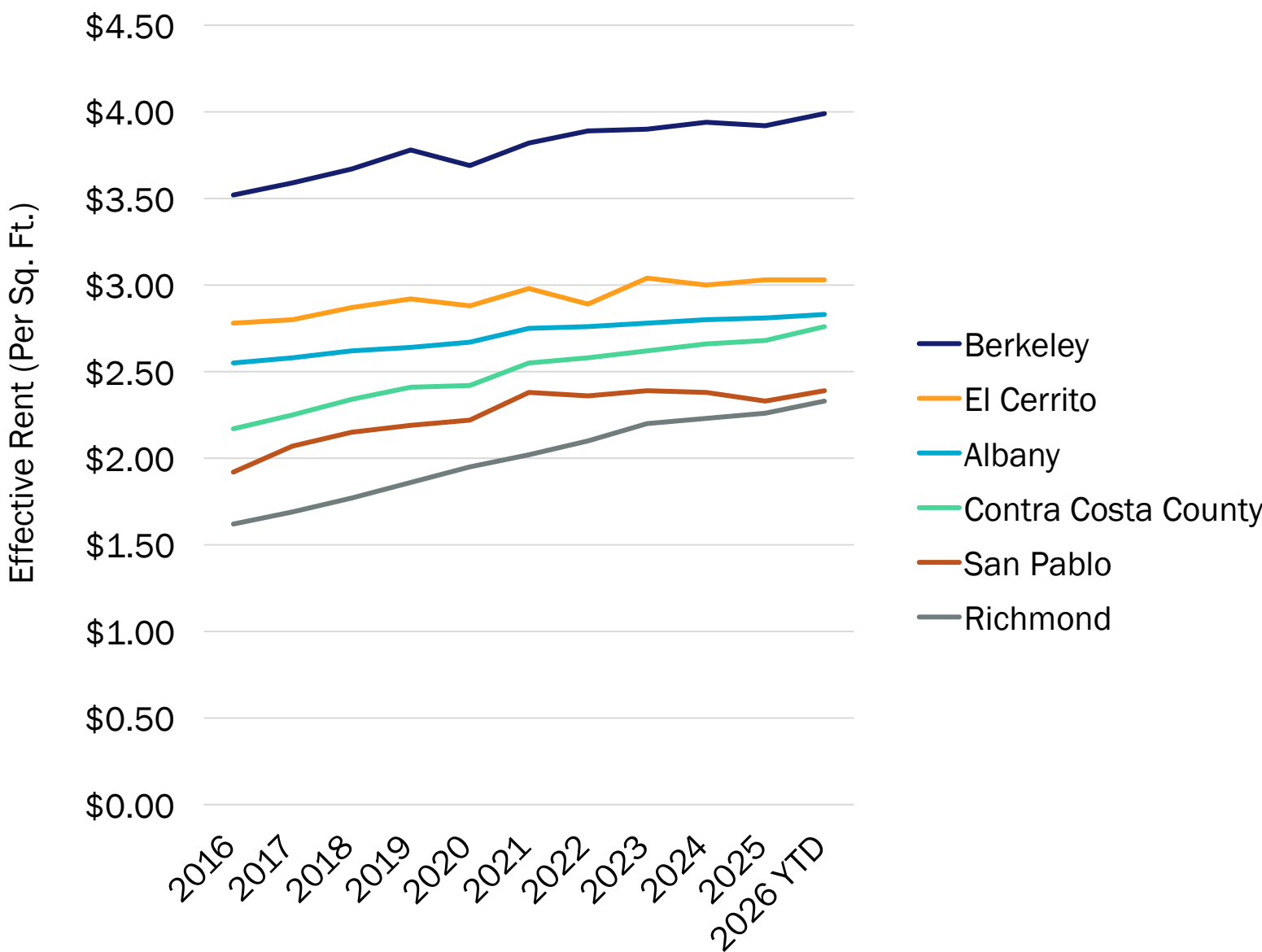
As multifamily rental residential development conditions improve, resumption of development activity in El Cerrito will be challenged by lower achievable rents.

Although new apartments in El Cerrito are well-occupied—with less than five percent vacancy as of May 2026—and are quickly leased, data shows that El Cerrito commands lower achievable rents than communities such as Berkeley. This continues the City’s historic position as a secondary market that tends to attract housing development only when regional demand drives significant broad increases in rents and sales prices. This positioning creates an ongoing challenge for new market rate housing development activity in El Cerrito for higher-density multifamily housing products until local achievable rents increase or other factors decrease the cost of development.

Recently completed financial feasibility analyses for the City of Berkeley and other Bay Area jurisdictions found that townhomes and other construction types are outperforming multifamily rental housing under current development conditions.

Townhomes are relatively inexpensive to construct, can command high sales prices, and can be completed and sold in smaller quantities.

Average Monthly Multifamily Rent (Per Sq. Ft.), 2016 to 2026



Source: CoStar, 2026; Strategic Economics, 2026.

Goal #4 – Incentivize and Encourage Development

Relevant Existing Conditions

New development provides significant fiscal benefits for the City of El Cerrito. Property sales and new development result in a reassessment of property value, typically resulting in a significant increase in property tax revenue received by the City of El Cerrito.

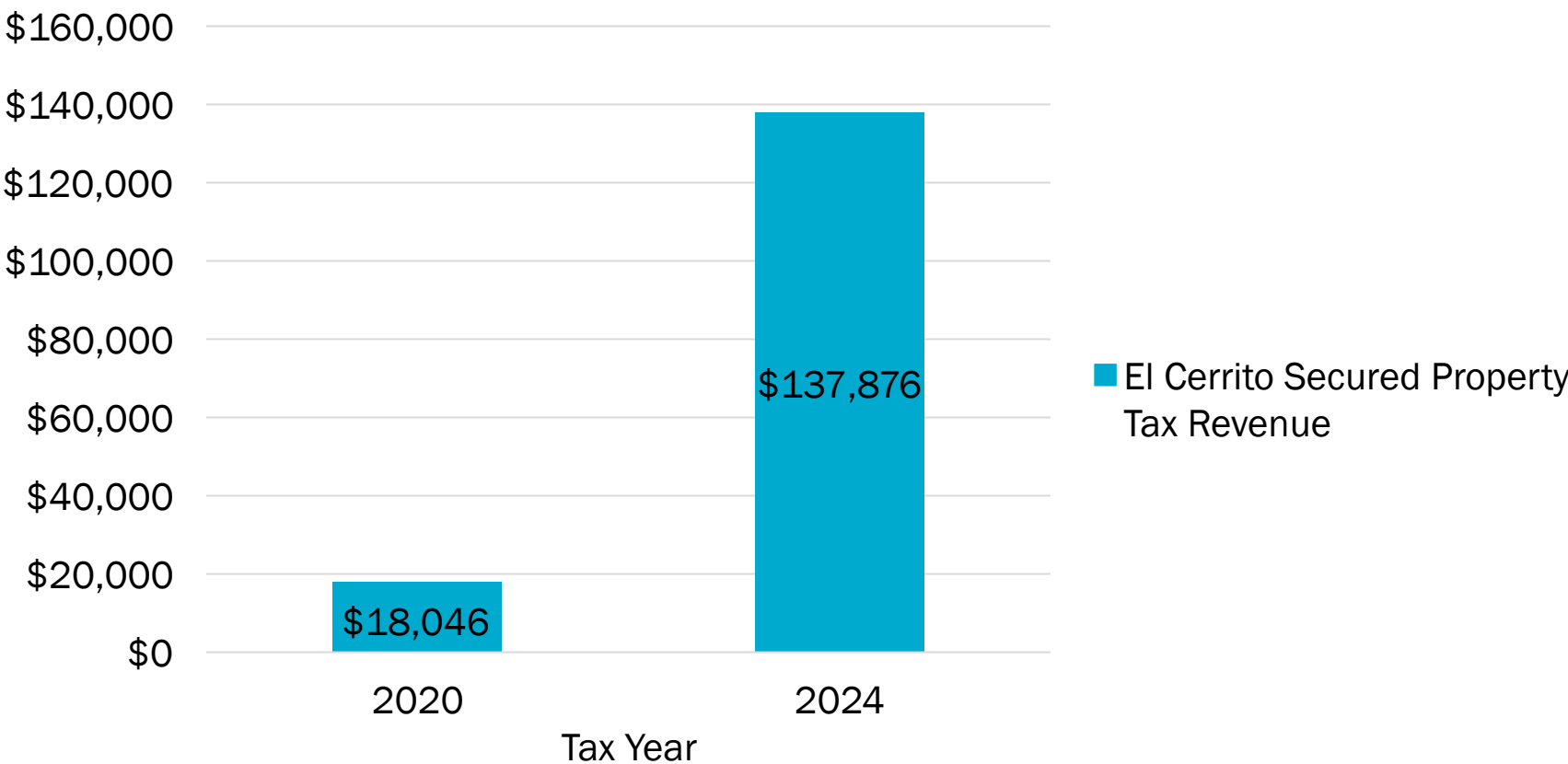
Shallow and small sites along the San Pablo Avenue corridor are especially challenging to develop. These conditions negatively impact the ability to design a cost-efficient housing project, resulting in building designs with higher ratios of unleaseable spaces such as corridors, stairways, and elevators.

Some properties along San Pablo Avenue that were entitled for housing or mixed use, and have encountered feasibility issues, are now being marketed by their owners for other uses. These other uses—such as quick-serve food service—are financially attractive to developers under current conditions due to the decline in the financial feasibility of multifamily housing. Shifting development interest over time requires flexibility and ongoing monitoring to assure the City’s goals and vision for the corridor can still be achieved.

Examples of the Fiscal Benefits of New Development:

- Increased property tax revenue
- Sales tax revenue from new residents and/or commercial space
- One-time payment of impact fees for capital needs

Cerrito Vista Apartments Property Tax Revenues, Pre-Development and Post-Development (nominal dollars)



Source: Contra Costa County, 2026; Strategic Economics, 2026.

Goal #4 – Incentivize and Encourage Development

Relevant Existing Conditions

Much of the Plan Area is subject to the Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC) Policy. The TOC policy of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission sets standards for certain local regulations within a half-mile of El Cerrito's two BART stations. Compliance with the TOC Policy is voluntary, but future One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) funding cycles give preference to compliant jurisdictions through a points-based system.

The TOC requirements support the Specific Plan's vision but do not align well with current development conditions in El Cerrito. The TOC policy requires zoning that achieves an average minimum density of 75 dwelling units per acre, which at a site-specific level would correspond to a roughly four- or five-story apartment building. This housing product type matches envisioned development in the Specific Plan but is challenging to build under current development conditions.

Transit-Oriented Community (TOC) Residential Requirements Summary

- **Applicability** – Half-mile buffer around both El Cerrito BART stations
- **Designation** – “Tier 2” area due to BART service frequency
- **Density** – TOC area must meet an average minimum density of 75 units per acre
- **Parking** – TOC area cannot set a parking minimum requirement, and the maximum ratio is .5 parking spaces per housing unit for residential development

Source: Metropolitan Transportation Commission, 2025; Strategic Economics, 2025.

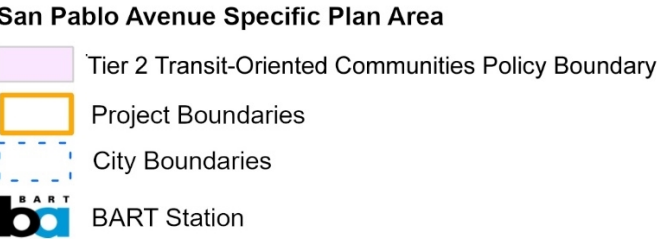
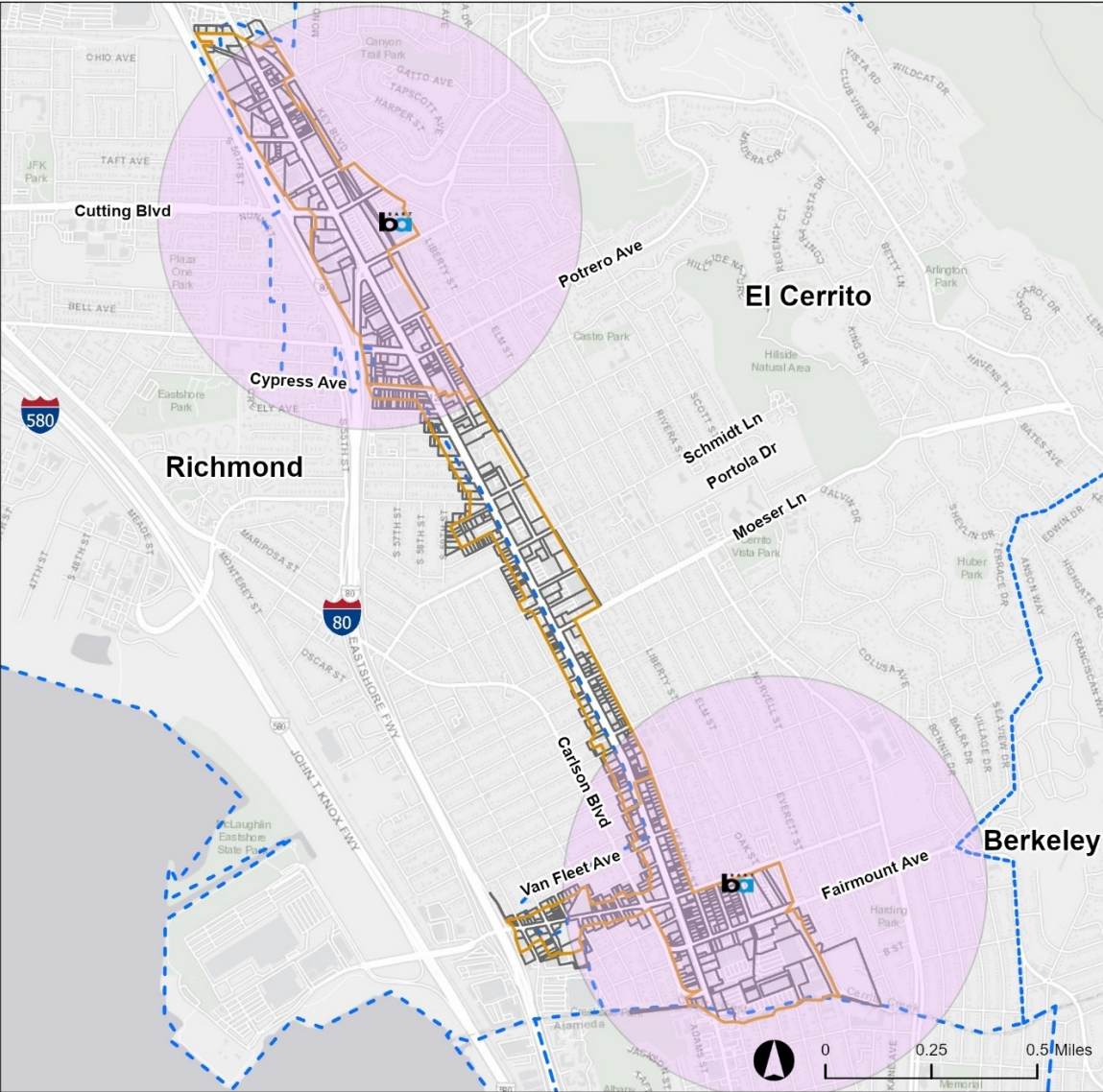
Goal #4 – Incentivize and Encourage Development

Implementation Strategies

Strategy 4.1 – Given current market preferences for and the feasibility of townhome products, assess where and whether the City of El Cerrito may readily allow such uses. For example, large parcels immediately adjacent to or at BART stations may be prioritized for higher-density mixed-use housing and pedestrian-oriented retail, while other portions of the corridor include a greater diversity of new development that still meets rigorous standards for pedestrian-oriented design.

Strategy 4.1a - Identify key sites that may become feasible for development of townhomes, smaller scale mixed-use housing development, and other housing formats besides traditional multifamily in the near term, where compatible with the TOC policy.

Specific Plan Area TOC Policy Boundaries



Sources: City of El Cerrito, 2024; Strategic Economics, 2025.



Goal #4 – Incentivize and Encourage Development

Implementation Strategies

Strategy 4.2 – Review and potentially adjust impact fees, inclusionary standards, costs of development-specific infrastructure and off-site improvement requirements, and other local policy-driven factors that increase costs for new housing development. Examples include waivers provided for a requirement to place power lines underground or the City’s temporary Project Kickstart, which reduced impact and Inclusionary Zoning fees for certain projects seeking building permits. The City of El Cerrito should maintain requirements critical to the fulfilling the long-term vision of the Specific Plan but can otherwise consider an appropriate balance of short-term losses of fees or other revenues with the long-term fiscal benefits of new development.

Strategy 4.2a – Consider adoption of reduced inclusionary housing requirements to support market rate housing development feasibility, while considering TOC Policy implications. Current feasibility conditions in much of the Bay Area, including the Plan Area, justify the consideration of reduced inclusionary

housing requirements—particularly for rental housing projects. However, the City should maintain modest inclusionary housing requirements to produce affordable housing units and resources if development conditions improve more rapidly than the policy can be adjusted. Although the City of El Cerrito’s policy currently falls short of the TOC Policy’s inclusionary requirement, the City can fully comply with the policy by demonstrating to MTC that the 15 percent requirement is not financially feasible.

Strategy 4.3 – Identify and implement new methods for funding the Affordable Housing Trust Fund that are less reliant on market rate housing development. Examples of options include dedicating returned tax increment revenues to the fund, adopting an annual transfer to the fund, adopting an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District that includes funding for affordable housing, or considering a new bond measure that supports affordable housing. Additional details are provided in the Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy for San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Implementation.

4. Data Appendix

**Under Separate Cover Available at City Hall and
[here](#) at elcerrito.gov/SPASP**

RESOLUTION 2026-XX

RESOLUTION IN RECOGNITION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR MELANIE MINTZ FOR 22 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE CITY OF EL CERRITO UPON RETIREMENT

WHEREAS, Melanie Mintz, Community Development Director and El Cerrito resident, has announced her retirement after 22 years of dedicated work in providing exceptional service to the El Cerrito community with the goal of creating a safe and resilient future for all, and should be recognized for her service upon the occasion of her retirement, effective July 10, 2026; and

WHEREAS, Melanie joined the City of El Cerrito on 12/13/2004 as an Environmental Analyst III; and

WHEREAS, Melanie has been an integral part of major City rehabilitation and improvement efforts like the Baxter Creek Gateway Project, the Rialto Theater renovation, the El Cerrito Recycling and Environmental Resource Center, ensuring the City's high quality of life; and

WHEREAS, as Environmental Services Manager, Melanie promoted El Cerrito's sustainability by leading many important environmental planning initiatives such as launching the effort that created El Cerrito's first Climate Action Plan and spearheading the creation of the City's Urban Greening Plan; and

WHEREAS, as Community Development Director, Melanie's innovative and collaborative leadership style has fostered ties between City staff, developers, and El Cerrito residents while making purposeful decisions to create vibrancy, grow and support local business, and keeping public spaces active and diverse; and

WHEREAS, under Melanie's leadership, the Community Development Department was successful in advancing the City's housing and economic development goals/vision through the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan resulting in the production of new market-rate and affordable housing as well as new commercial opportunities along the corridor including Mayfair, Elora, Credence, Cerrito Vista, Village 29, Hana Gardens, and Metro 510; and

WHEREAS, Melanie's community building experience has been instrumental in forming successful public-private partnerships including the Transit-Oriented Development at El Cerrito Plaza BART Station.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of El Cerrito that it takes great pride and pleasure in drawing special attention and recognition to Melanie Mintz for her 22 years of exemplary service to the City and extends its sincere appreciation and best wishes for continued happiness and success upon her retirement on July 10, 2026.

I CERTIFY that at a special meeting on July 7, 2026 the City Council of the City of El Cerrito passed this Resolution by the following vote:

AYES:	COUNCILMEMBERS:
NOES:	COUNCILMEMBERS:
ABSTAIN:	COUNCILMEMBERS:
ABSENT:	COUNCILMEMBERS:

IN WITNESS of this action, I sign this document and affix the corporate seal of the City of El Cerrito on

_____.

Holly M. Charléty, City Clerk

APPROVED:

Gabe Quinto, Mayor



**SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA MATERIALS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

July 7, 2026

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING (6:15 PM)

(rev. 7.7.2026)

**Agenda Item No. 3A – Fifth Public Hearing on Transition to District-Based Elections
– Introduction of an Ordinance to Establish District-based
Elections, Adopt the Final Map to Establish District
Boundaries, and Establish Sequence of District Elections**

1. **Staff Presentation**
2. **Public Comments**

**Agenda Item No. 4A – San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Implementation Update:
Economic Development and Affordable Housing
Presentation**



Transition to District-Based Elections Fifth Public Hearing

July 7, 2026

Supplemental Materials Page 2 of 49

Agenda Packet Page 92 of 139



Agenda

- Why is the City Council changing how members are elected?
- Why is this happening so quickly?
- Did the Council consider other alternative voting systems?
- What's happened in the process so far?
- How would district-based elections work?
- What's next?

Why is the City Council changing how members are elected?

- Current City Election System is At-Large
- California Voting Rights Act
 - Prohibits an at-large election system that impairs the ability of a protected class to elect candidates of its choice or its ability to influence the outcome of an election.
 - Violation established if racially polarized voting (RPV) and dilution occurs in elections or other matters submitted to the voters
 - Awards attorneys' fees to a plaintiff who successfully challenges a city's at-large election system

Why is the City Council changing how members are elected?

- March 17th Demand Letter claims City's at-large system is racially polarized and violates CVRA
- Requests City transition to district-based elections
- City commissioned its own analysis, which concluded a statistical possibility of RPV in past elections in El Cerrito
- No allegation of intentional racial discrimination in voting and no evidence presented to support such an allegation

Why is the City Council changing how members are elected?

- CVRA Safe Harbor Provisions
 - Caps attorneys' fees at what is now approx. \$38,000 to \$40,000 **if a city follows the safe harbor process**
 - Adopt resolution of intent to transition to districts within 45 days of receiving the demand letter
 - Adopt ordinance establishing district-based elections within 90 days of resolution passage

Why is this happening so quickly?

- CVRA allows potential plaintiff to agree to extend the Safe Harbor timelines
- City Attorney requested extensions
- Request denied
- Completing process within Safe Harbor timelines maintains the cap on attorneys' fees
- Why not litigate?
 - Multiple cities have fought demands to transition to district elections
 - None have succeeded
 - All have paid the plaintiff's large legal bills
- Did the recent US Supreme Court decision regarding the federal Voting Rights Act change the legal considerations?

Did the Council consider other alternative voting systems?

- Council received information about other voting systems
 - Ranked Choice Voting
 - Citywide Single Vote (Limited Voting)
 - Cumulative Voting
- None of the alternative systems maintain the protections of the Safe Harbor
- Contra Costa County not currently equipped to implement RCV—**El Cerrito would pay the full cost to implement and additional annual maintenance costs**

What's happened in the process so far?

- April 21: Adopted Resolution of Intent to Transition to Districts
- May 5: 1st Public Hearing held
- May 12: Virtual Community Workshop held
- May 14: Community Outreach at Bike to Wherever Day event
- May 19: 2nd Public Hearing held; Council direction to proceed with drafting maps with 5 districts
- June 3: Community Workshop #2 held in City Council Chambers
- June 9: 3rd Public Hearing held; Council reviewed maps prepared by the public and demographer
- June 10: Community Outreach @ Coffee and Conversations with City Manager
- June 16: 4th Public Hearing held; Council advanced two maps for consideration
- July 4: Community Outreach at WorldOne Event

How would district-based elections work?

- One May 19, Council directed to move forward with 5 districts
 - The Mayor will continue to be a rotating office selected among the 5 members of Council
- District-based elections will occur in November 2028 and November 2030
 - November 2026 will be the last at-large Council election
- What does the transition mean for sitting members of Council?
 - This will be discussed in more detail during the district sequencing discussion, after Council selects a map

How would district-based elections work?

Hypothetical

- Councilmember 1 elected to an at-large seat in 2026 and lives in a district with a district-based election in 2028
- Councilmember 1 runs for and wins the district seat
- Councilmember 1 serves a 4-year term till 2032
- Councilmember 1's at-large seat becomes vacant
- Council can appoint someone or call a special election to fill the vacant seat
- Whoever fills the vacant at-large seat serves the remainder of the term
- In this scenario, the composition of the Council would be:
 - CM 1: district seat with term ending in 2032
 - CM2: district seat with term ending in 2032
 - CM3: district seat with term ending in 2032
 - CM4: at-large seat with term ending in 2030
 - CM5: appointed or elected at special election to fill at-large seat with term ending in 2032

What's next?

- Tonight:
 - By motion, select a map
 - By motion, assign a number to each district and select the sequence of district elections in 2028 and 2030
 - Introduce the proposed Ordinance
- July 21: Adopt Ordinance to change to district-based elections
- November 2028: First district-based Council election
- November 2030: Second district-based Council election



Questions and Presentation by Demographer

From: [Will H. Provost](#)
To: [Lina Huang](#)
Cc: [Holly Charléty](#)
Subject: Public Comment for July 7
Date: Thursday, June 18, 2026 3:35:38 PM

Hi Lina and Holly,

Can you please add this as a public comment for the City Council meeting on July 7? I talked to Maureen and told her we could add this rather than having her forward or resubmit.

TY!
Will

Dear Mr Provost,

My name is Maureen Dixon, and I'm an El Cerrito resident. I live on Norvell Street. I have a comment on the proposed district maps. I've seen the two versions that came out of the June 16th meeting. I have a strong preference for map C3. This map divides the city using boundaries that reflect the differing interests of the residents who live in the hills and the people who live in the neighborhoods near Ashbury Street.

Those of us in the "flatlands" will be directly affected by the changes to BART, and the TOD that is happening on the BART property and any other future development that is planned for San Pablo Avenue. Also any influx of parking in the neighborhoods resulting from the TOD may show up in front of our houses, but not the houses in the hills. The people in the hills also have more fire-related concerns than we do. Thus my preference for map C3.

Thank you of you time,
Maureen Dixon

From: [Sue Duncan](#)
To: [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Public Comments Agenda Item 3A
Date: Tuesday, July 7, 2026 9:05:10 AM

Caution! This message was sent from outside your organization.

Honorable Mayor and City Council Members,

I strongly urge you to adopt map C3. It strongly follows the former Cal Fire maps of the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ) that was in place before Cal Fire redrew and greatly reduced the VHFHSZ area in El Cerrito. Many of the residents that are in that former area are very aware of that designation. As you consider the maps from the point of community of interest, this is the best that encompasses that COI.

Thank you for your consideration of my suggestion.

Sue Duncan

Speaking as an El Cerrito Resident

From: [Rebecah Kenny](#)
To: [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Public Comments - agenda item 3A
Date: Tuesday, July 7, 2026 10:16:09 AM

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I feel strongly that map C3 is the better of the maps under consideration. It does the best job representing several significant communities of interest in our city. Of particular note are renters living in apartments close to San Pablo and people living in the upper hills near Wildcat Canyon and our large open spaces who most need to plan for fire abatement.

Rebecah Kenny
El Cerrito resident

From: [Tara El](#)
To: [City Clerk](#); [Rebecca Salzman](#); [Carolyn Wyringer](#); [William Krizanec](#); [Lisa Montague](#); [Gabe Ovato](#)
Subject: C3 Districting Preference
Date: Tuesday, July 7, 2020 10:16:35 AM

Caution! This message was sent from outside your organization.

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Dear City Council Members,

My name is Tova Feldmanstern and I live in El Cerrito. I am emailing you to express my preference for Districting Map C3 over A2. I personally prefer C3 because I think it does the best job of keeping communities of interest together.

Thanks for your consideration,
Tova Feldmanstern
Northern El Cerrito

From: [Chris Rodriguez](#)
To: [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Public Comments - agenda item 3A
Date: Tuesday, July 7, 2026 10:26:52 AM

Caution! This message was sent from outside your organization.

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Hello I'm writing to comment on the approved redistricting maps! I feel that C3 is the better of the two maps that are under consideration. I think that it does the best job in representing several of the communities in our city. What particularly stands out to me are the apartments closer to Sanpablo and the folks living in the hills near Wildcat and our large open spaces which will most need to plan for fire abatement.

Best,
Chris Rodriguez

From: Sandy Lynn Davis
To: [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Public Comments –agenda item 3A
Date: Tuesday, July 7, 2026 10:51:17 AM

Dear City Council Members,

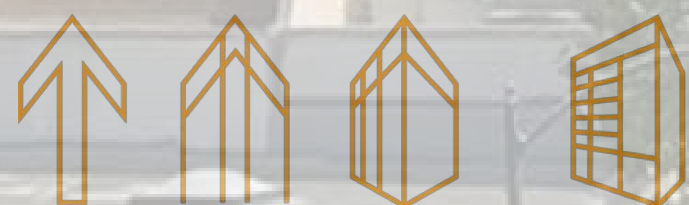
I live near El Cerrito Plaza and would like to voice my support for district map C3, because it keeps communities of interest together. I hope you will keep this in mind when voting on a map tonight.

Sincerely,
Sandy Davis





San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Economic Development and Affordable Housing Analysis and Implementation Strategy



STRATEGIC
ECONOMICS

City Council Meeting Presentation
July 7, 2026

Background

2014 San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

- Market-Based regulatory framework for transforming the corridor
- Multimodal with opportunities for living, working and community life
- Deepen sense of place and community identity; attract private investment; strengthen partnerships; enhance the public realm; add housing and commercial space

2022 Plan Update

- MTC Priority Development Area Grant to increase development capacity due to early success
- Included funding for *Economic Development and Affordable Housing/Anti-Displacement* Analysis and Implementation Strategy

Current Implementation Strategy

- Assess post-pandemic market and development conditions
- Identify goals and strategies for both market-rate and affordable housing production and economic development that address opportunities and challenges
- Align strategies with City capacity and resources



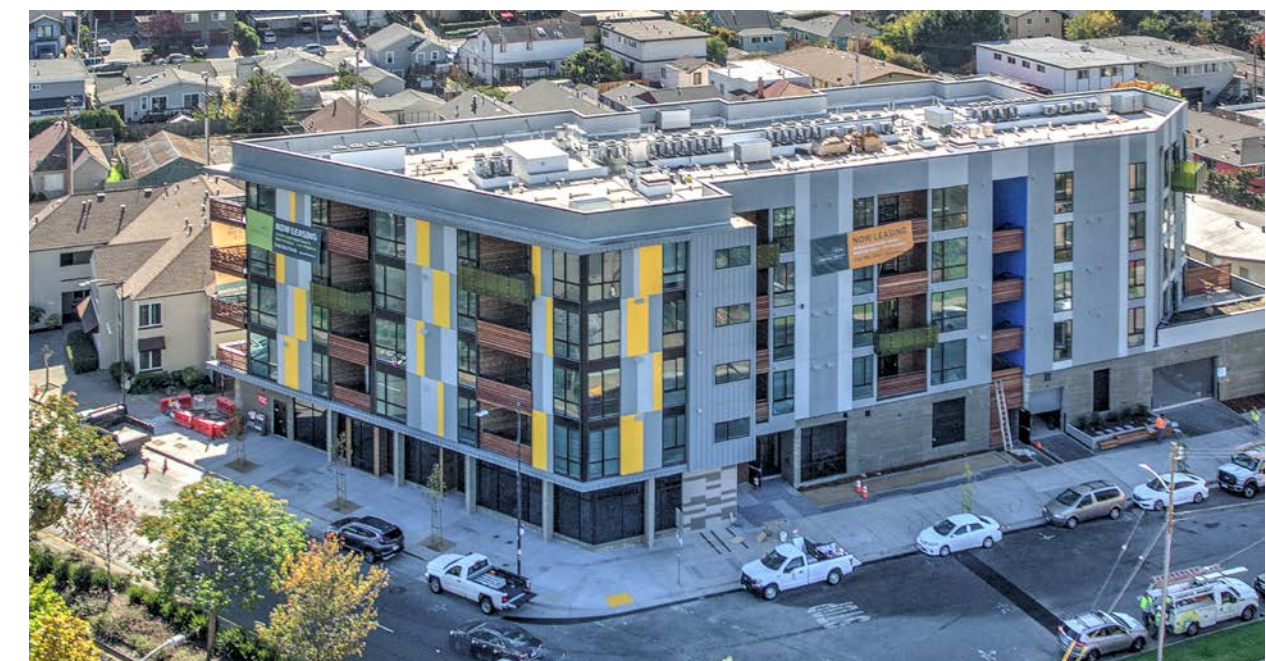
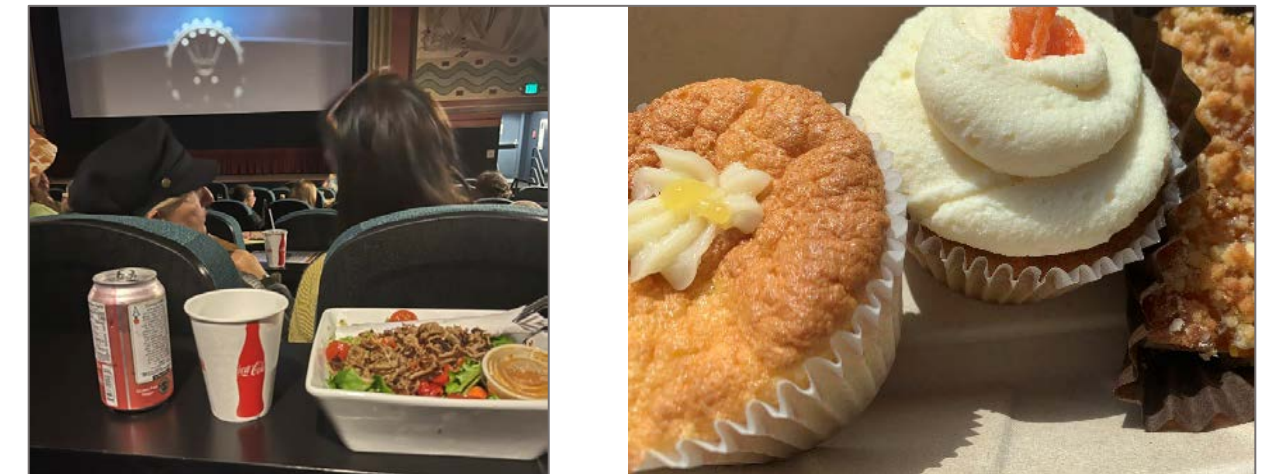
Analysis and Implementation Strategy Contents

Implementation Strategy for the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

Overview of Conditions Impacting Implementation
Opportunities and Challenges
Successes in the Plan Area
Shifts in broader economic and development conditions
Suggested Goals and Strategies
Data Appendix

Affordable Housing and Anti Displacement Strategy and Executive Summary

Need and Existing Supply
Overview of City Actions
Policy Review
Key Findings and Policy Considerations

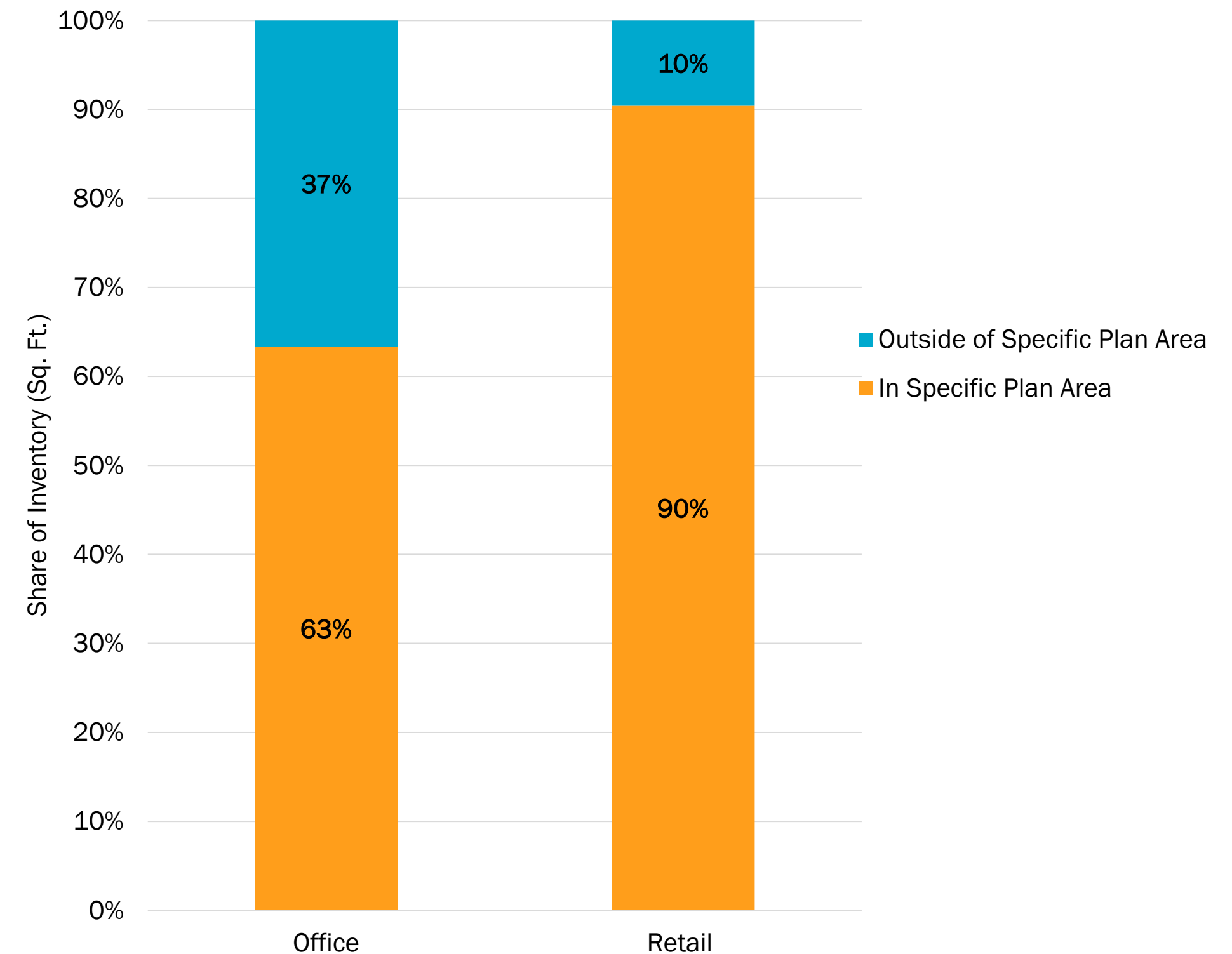


Overview of Conditions Impacting Implementation

The Plan Area is critical to El Cerrito's economy and fiscal health

- Includes more than 60% of citywide office space and 90% of retail space.
- Local-serving businesses and regional retail destinations
- Generates a significant share of City sales and property tax revenues
- Contains most key opportunity sites for future residential and mixed-use development.
- Connects to regional employment destinations via I-80, two BART stations, AC Transit, and San Pablo Avenue.

Share of Citywide Office and Retail Located in the Specific Plan Area



Source: CoStar, 2026; Strategic Economics, 2026.

Overview of Conditions Impacting Implementation

Successes Since Plan Adoption

Housing Production

- 400 market-rate, affordable and mixed-use housing units completed across multiple projects
- 20% increase in multifamily rental housing units

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) pipeline

- 743 entitled units at the El Cerrito Plaza BART

Market Performance

- Mayfair Station: 96% occupancy
- Cerrito Vista: 93% occupancy + recently sold

Public and private investment in the public realm

- Street frontages, public art, and Del Norte Complete Streets

Retail Performance

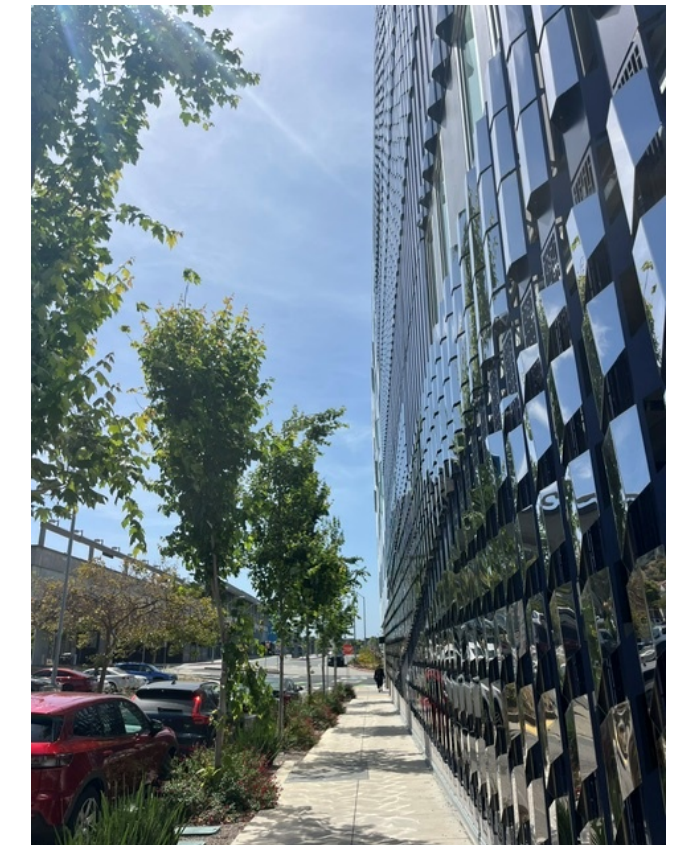
- Full recovery of inflation-adjusted sales tax revenues since 2020 lows



Former **Mayfair Property (2018)**



Mayfair Station + Elora (2026): 156 market-rate units, **69** affordable units, and **4** new ground-floor businesses under construction



Overview of Conditions Impacting Implementation

Regional Economic Conditions Affecting Local Development Feasibility

Construction and financing costs have increased significantly

- Construction costs have outpaced rent growth
- Multifamily development difficult to finance--even in strong infill locations
- Directly affects development feasibility in El Cerrito

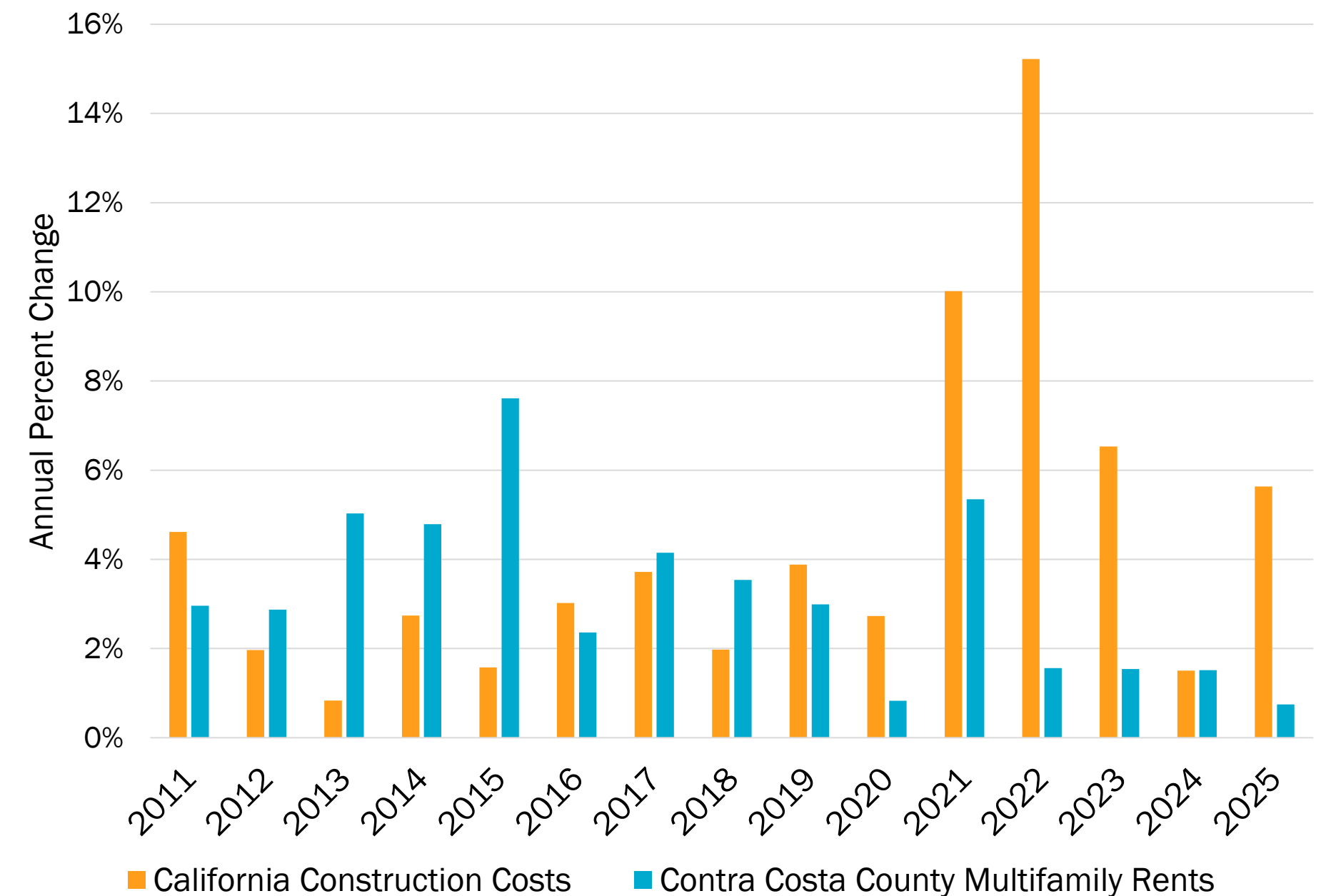
Hotel development has slowed in Contra Costa County & regionally

- Still recovering due to declines in business travel and slow growth in major conferences
- Contra Costa County hotel occupancy rates declined from 80% to 64% between 2016 and 2025

Transit usage patterns have shifted

- Hybrid work reduced BART ridership recovery
- Weakening the premium historically associated with transit-adjacent sites

Construction costs have increased faster than apartment rents



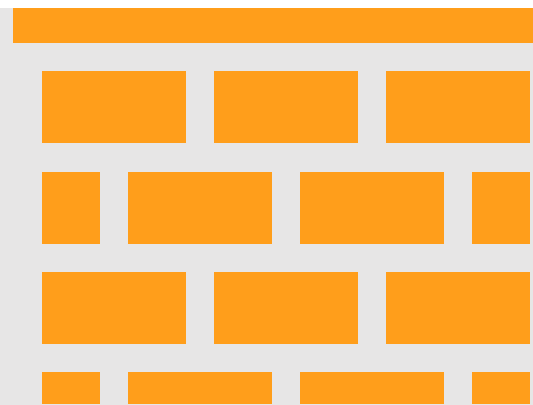
Implementation Strategies and Goals



**Support Existing
and Potential Small
Businesses in the
Plan Area**



**Activate and
Reposition Vacant
and Underutilized
Smaller Retail
Spaces**



**Support Ongoing
Occupancy of Large-
Scale Retail Space**



**Incentivize and
Encourage
Development**

Goal #1 – Support Existing and Potential Small Businesses in the Plan Area

Relevant Existing Conditions

- Diverse customer base supports local and regional businesses
- Home-based entrepreneurs could potentially expand to brick-and-mortar space.
- Many older retail spaces that require significant tenant improvements
- Retail activity is historically dispersed along the corridor
- Many small businesses rely on curbside access and convenient customer access (e.g. left and U-turns)



Goal #1 – Support Existing and Potential Small Businesses

Implementation Strategies

1.1 – Support small and emerging businesses

- Information, navigation, and access to regional programs

1.2 – Promote the corridor as a destination

- Strengthen food, retail and identity

1.3 – Maintain and expand flexible zoning and standards

- Support shared spaces, outdoor dining, pop-ups, markers and flexible tenancy

1.4 – Reduce tenant improvement (TI) barriers in older retail spaces

- Explore grants, façade programs and partnerships to support reinvestment, repositioning, and occupancy

1.5 – Implement a proactive curb and access management approach

- Balance customer access/parking, loading, deliveries, and multimodal improvements

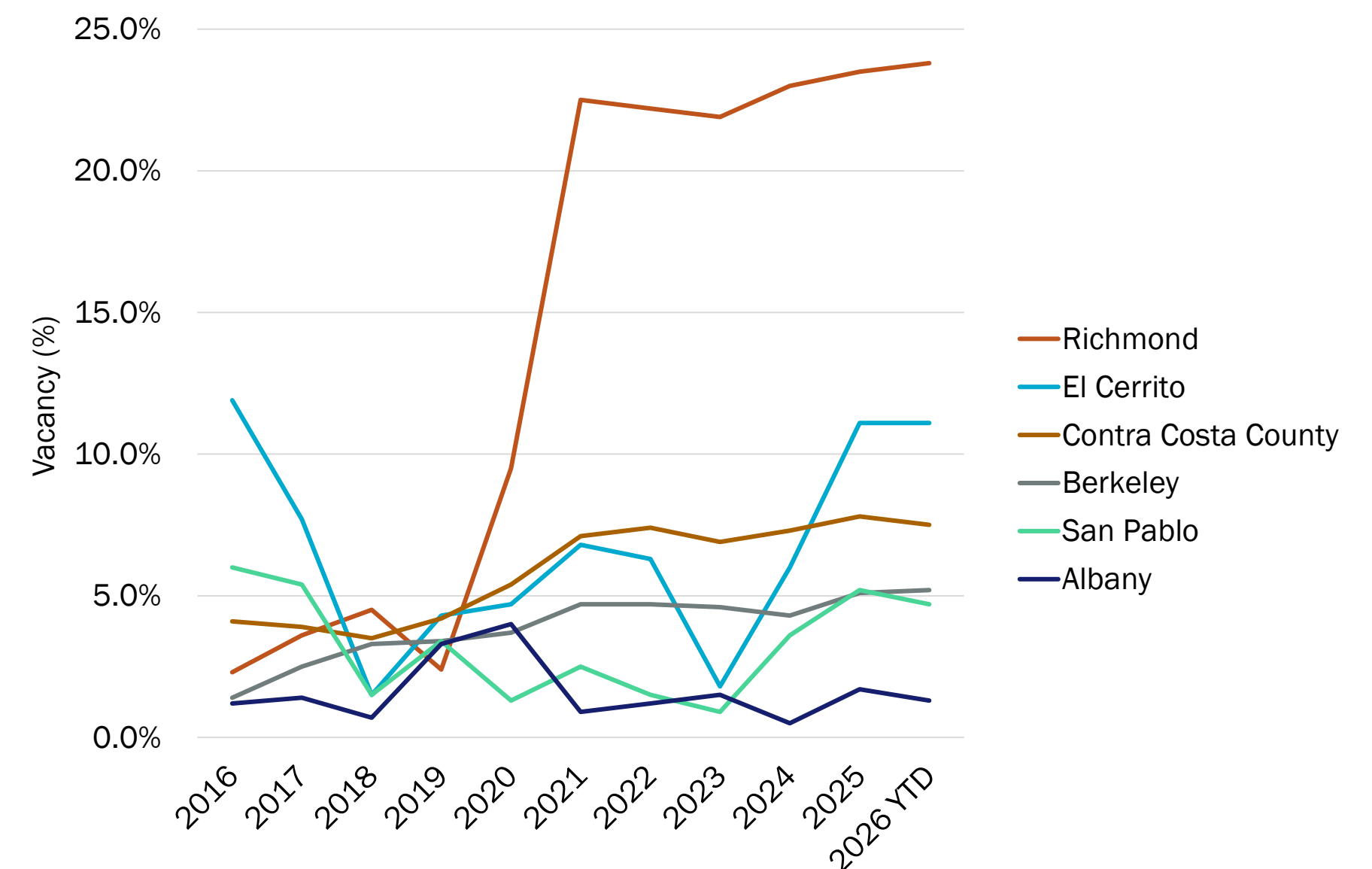


Goal #2 – Activate and Reposition Vacant and Underutilized Smaller Retail Spaces

Relevant Existing Conditions

- Retail vacancy remains relatively low overall (~10%); some vacancies are large (former Marshalls and Joanns) and/or highly visible (former Trevino's, block south of Eureka)
- Some properties actively marketed and turn over relatively quickly; others held or marketed for future redevelopment
- Retail activity remains dispersed (few cluster benefits, foot traffic)
- Lower achievable rents can help some businesses but can also discourage property owners from reinvesting in older properties

Retail Vacancy Rate (Percent of Square Feet), 2016 to 2026



Note: Recent increases in El Cerrito's retail vacancy rate are primarily attributable to vacated locations of Marshall's and Joann Fabric and Crafts.

Source: CoStar, 2026; Strategic Economics, 2026.

Goal #2 – Activate and Reposition Vacant and Underutilized Smaller Retail Spaces

Implementation Strategies

2.1 - Partner with local real estate broker or specialist

- Conduct targeted outreach to identify barriers to leasing, redevelopment, and reinvestment

2.2 – Prioritize activation and reinvestment in key nodes

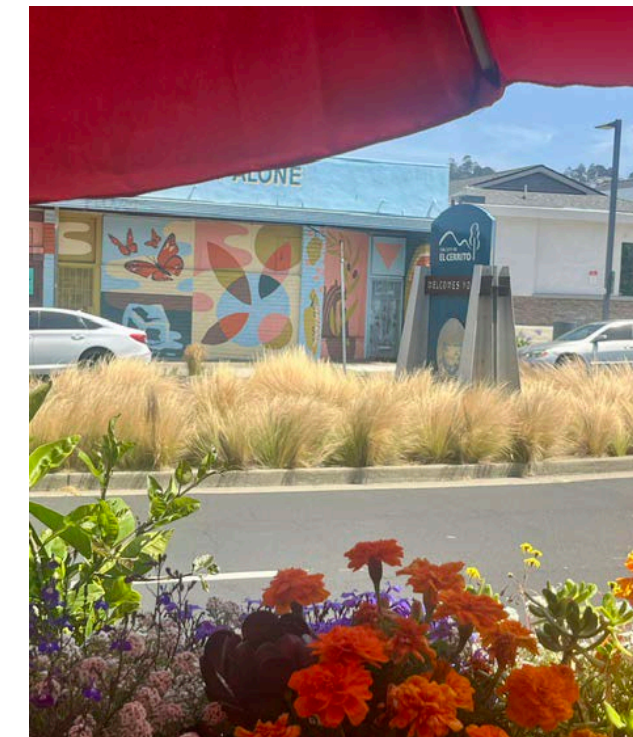
- Focus resources where clustering can increase foot traffic, visibility, and support business success

2.3 – Maintain active code enforcement and property standards

- Address visible vacancy, attractive nuisance conditions, and reuse barriers

2.4 – Facilitate reinvestment and beautification efforts through partnerships

- Support façade improvements, public art, and storefront activation

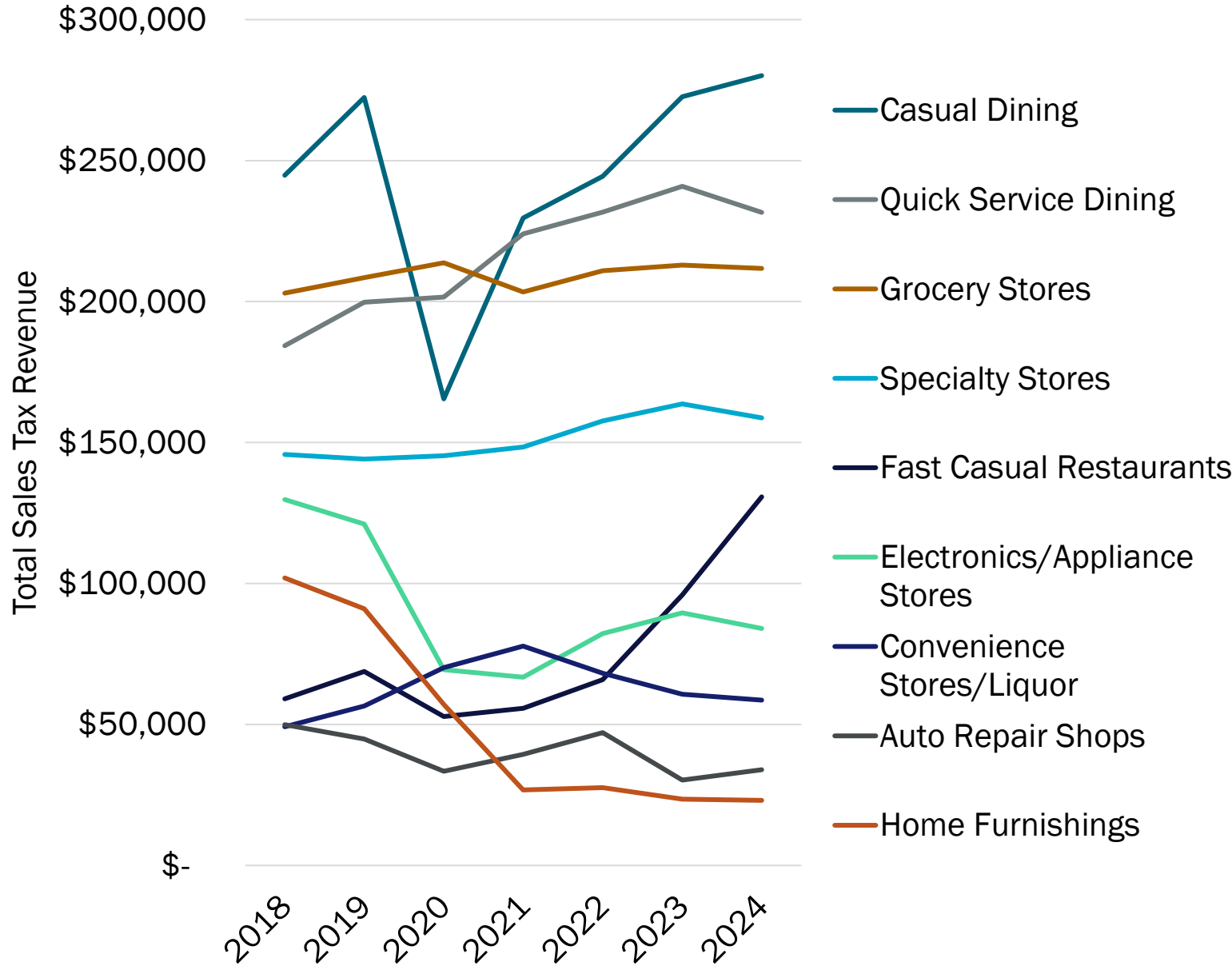


Goal #3 – Support Ongoing Occupancy of Large-Scale Retail Space

Relevant Existing Conditions

- Consumer spending is shifting away from traditional big-box retail toward dining, entertainment, fitness and experiential uses
- The Plan Area includes limited number of large-scale vacant retail spaces
- Tenanting and redevelopment of larger retail spaces can be constrained by CC&Rs (conditions, covenants, and restrictions) in shopping centers
- Some sites may require interim occupancy, adaptive reuse, or phased redevelopment before full buildout
- Support strong performers

El Cerrito Sales Tax Revenue by Business Type, 2018 to 2024



Note: Excludes business-to-business categories and categories that do not meet legal requirements for disclosure.

Source: HdL, 2025; Strategic Economics, 2025

Goal #3 – Support Ongoing Occupancy of Large-Scale Retail Space

Implementation Strategies

3.1 - Continue to monitor and evaluate the health of retail centers

- Track sales tax trends, market conditions, and broker feedback

3.2 – Support near term activation of large retail spaces.

- Encourage subdivision, multi-tenant reuse, and alternative commercial uses (fitness, entertainment, grocery, dining) to maintain occupancy.

3.3 - Engage shopping center property owners

- Explore opportunities for repositioning, interim occupancy, and redevelopment



Former Marshalls location



Current Marshalls at El Cerrito Plaza

Goal #4 – Incentivize and Encourage Development

Relevant Existing Conditions

New development provides significant **fiscal and community benefits** for the City of El Cerrito.

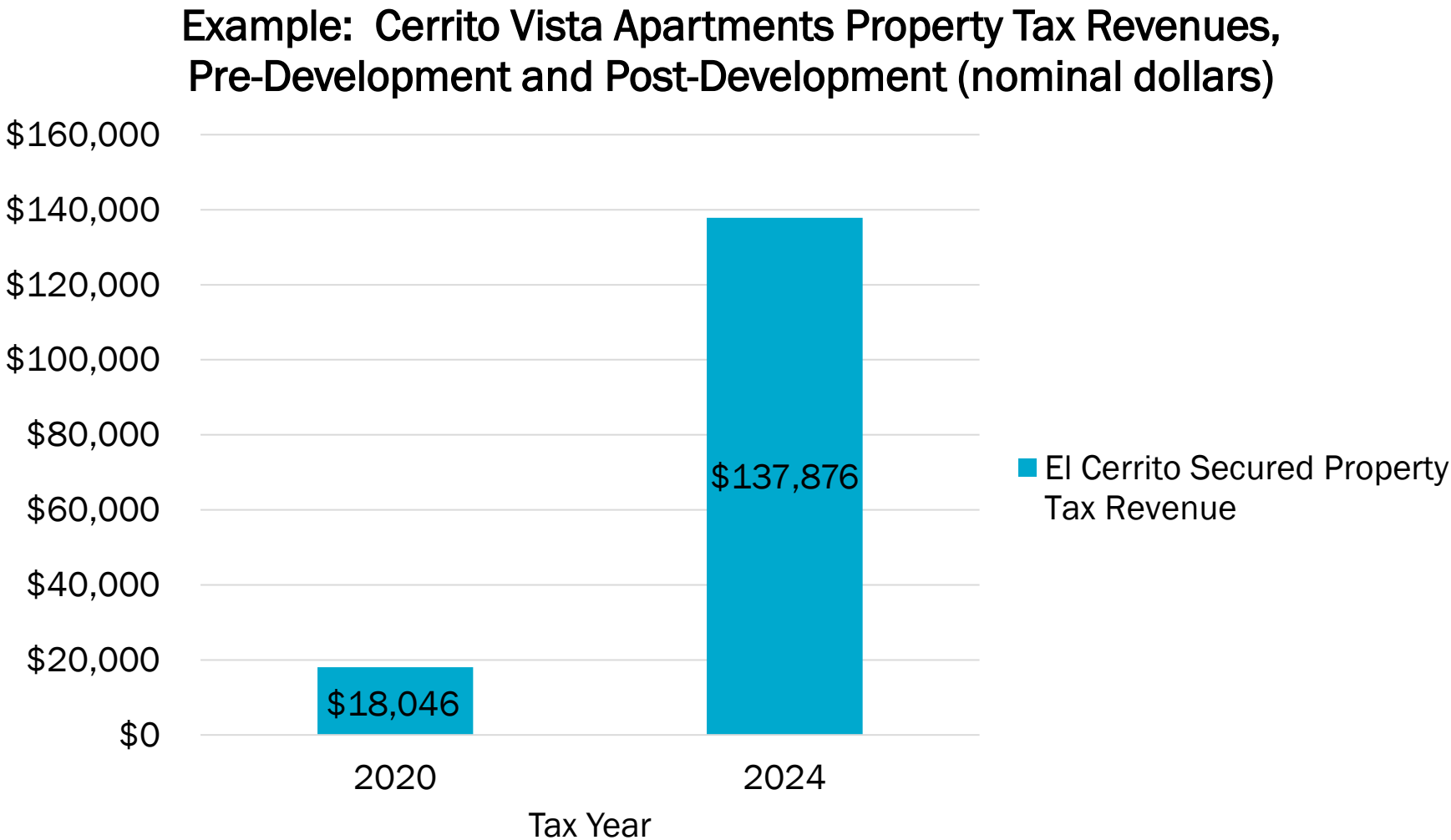
Multifamily market rate housing remains challenging to finance in current market conditions

Shallow and small sites along the San Pablo Avenue corridor are especially challenging to develop

Some properties along San Pablo Avenue that were entitled for market rate housing or mixed use, and have encountered feasibility issues, are now being marketed by their owners for other uses

Examples of Ongoing Fiscal Benefits of
New Market Rate Development

- Increased property tax revenue
- Sales tax revenue from new residents and/or commercial space



Source: Contra Costa County, 2026; Strategic Economics, 2026.

Goal #4 – Incentivize and Encourage Development

Relevant Existing Conditions

Much of the Plan Area is subject to the Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC) Policy

- The TOC policy of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission sets standards for certain local regulations within a half-mile of El Cerrito’s BART stations.
- Compliance with the TOC Policy is not mandatory; however:
- Future One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) funding cycles give preference to compliant jurisdictions through a points-based system

TOC requirements support the Specific Plan’s vision but may not align well with current development conditions in El Cerrito

Transit-Oriented Community (TOC) Residential Requirements Summary

- **Applicability** – Half-mile buffer around both El Cerrito BART stations
- **Designation** – “Tier 2” area due to BART service frequency
- **Density** – TOC area must meet an average minimum density of 75 units per acre
- **Parking** – TOC area cannot set a parking minimum requirement, and the maximum ratio is .5 parking spaces per housing unit for residential development

Goal #4 – Incentivize and Encourage Development

Implementation Strategies

4.1/4.1a – Explore housing types that are feasible in today’s market

- Evaluate where townhomes, small-scale mixed use, and ownership housing could be supported*

4.2 – Evaluate development costs and requirements

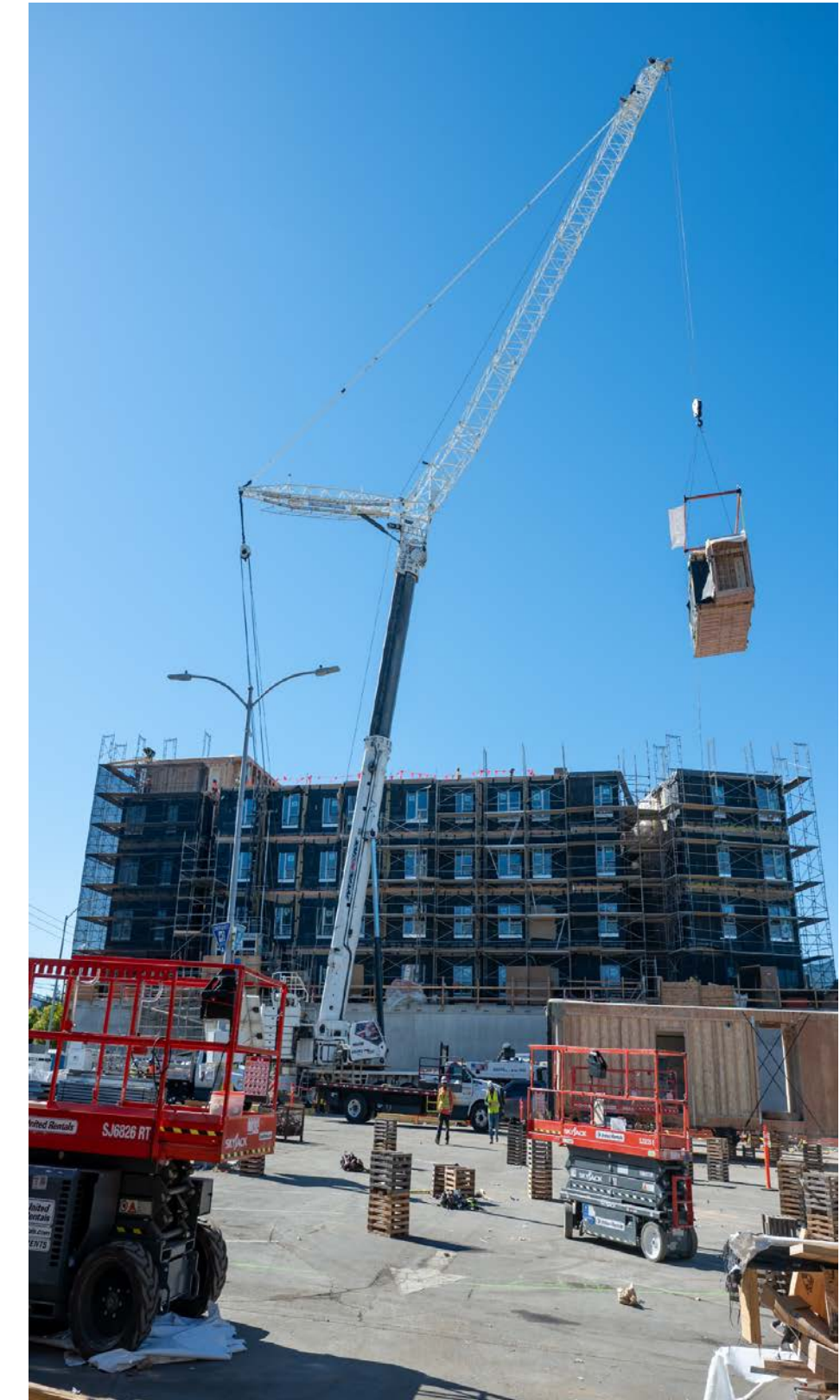
- Continuously review impact fees, standards, and local requirement that affect project feasibility

4.2a – Consider adjustments to inclusionary housing requirements*

4.3 – Identify new funding sources for affordable housing

- Explore dedicated revenue sources and financing tools

** Such strategies will need to take TOC Policy and associated tradeoffs into consideration*



Phase 1 El Cerrito Plaza Transit-Oriented Development Under Construction

Data Appendix

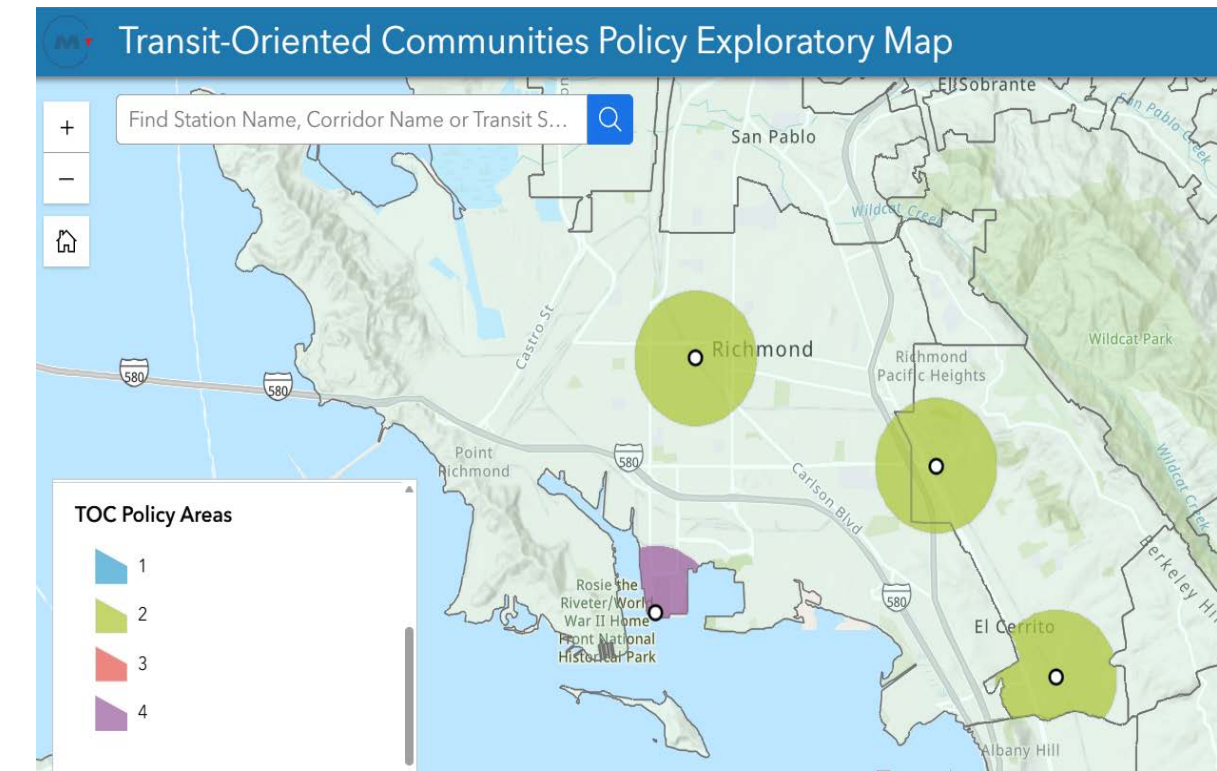
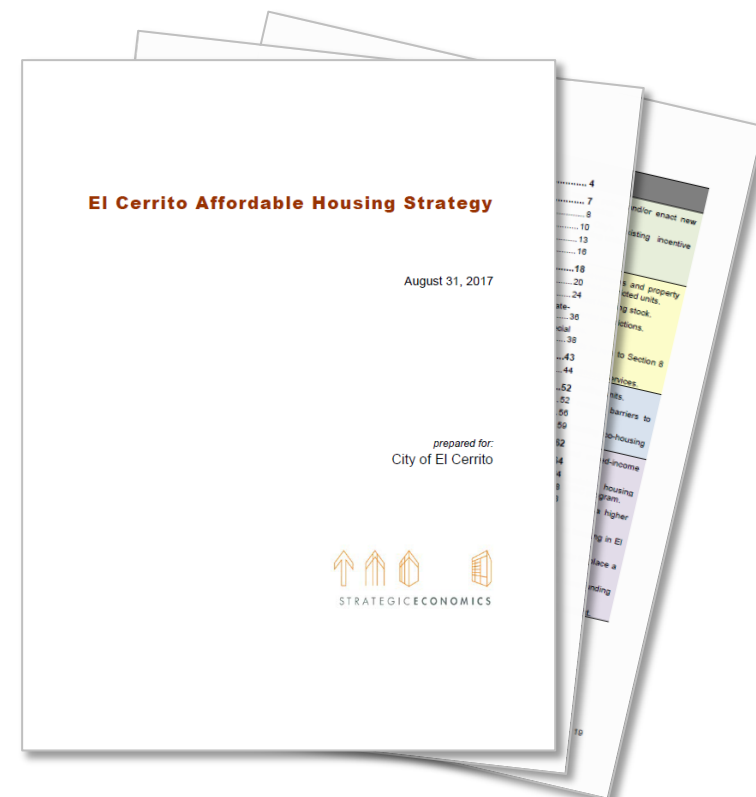
**Under Separate Cover Available at City Hall and
[here](#) at elcerrito.gov/SPASP**

Affordable Housing Background: Local, Regional, State Housing Plans



Adopted December 2021
Updated June 2026

FINAL REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ALLOCATION (RHNA) PLAN:
San Francisco Bay Area, 2023-2031



PLAN BAY AREA 2050 +



El Cerrito: Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) Targets

- The City is subject to housing production goals identified through the State-mandated Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)
- RHNA establishes **production goals by income categories for eight-year cycles**
- The state also requires the City to adopt a **Housing Element** that identifies plans for meeting the RHNA housing targets during this cycle
- **Area Median Income (AMI)** is used to calculate affordable housing rent and income limits annually
- **2026 Median Income:**
 - 1 - \$113,950
 - 2 - \$130,250
 - 3 - \$146,500
 - 4 - \$162,800

6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)

Very Low (0-50% AMI)	Low (50-80% AMI)	Moderate (80-120% AMI)	Above Moderate (Above 120% AMI)	Total
334	192	241	624	1,391

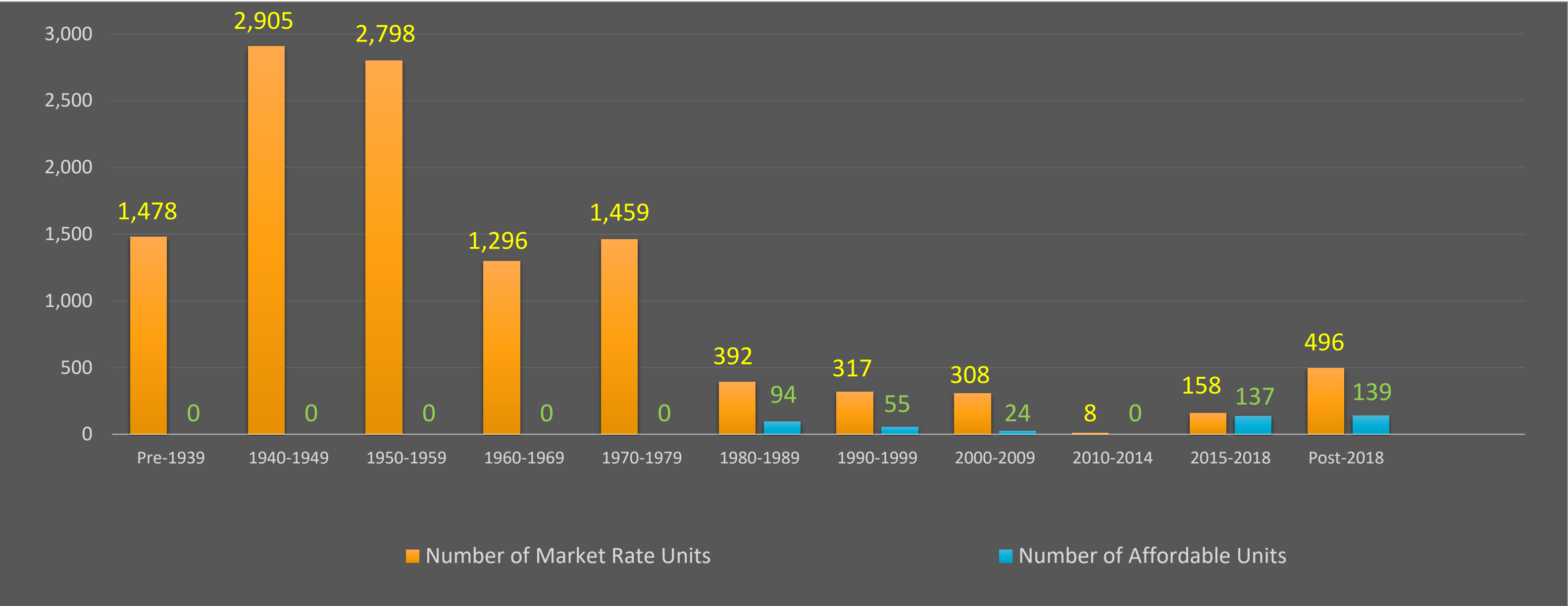
2026 State Income Limits, Contra Costa County
Area Median Income

Household Size	Acutely Low Income (0-15% AMI)	Extremely-Low (Up to 30% AMI)	Very-Low Income (Up to 50% AMI)	Low Income (Up to 80% AMI)	Moderate Income (Up to 120% AMI)
1	\$17,100	\$35,650	\$59,400	\$95,050	\$136,750
2	\$19,500	\$40,750	\$67,900	\$108,600	\$156,300
3	\$21,950	\$45,850	\$76,400	\$122,200	\$175,800
4	\$24,400	\$50,900	\$84,850	\$135,750	\$195,350

El Cerrito: Housing Production Over Time



- Most El Cerrito Housing Units were built between 1940 and 1980
- Housing production was minimal 1980-2014
- Housing production picked up post-2015 after Plan Adoption

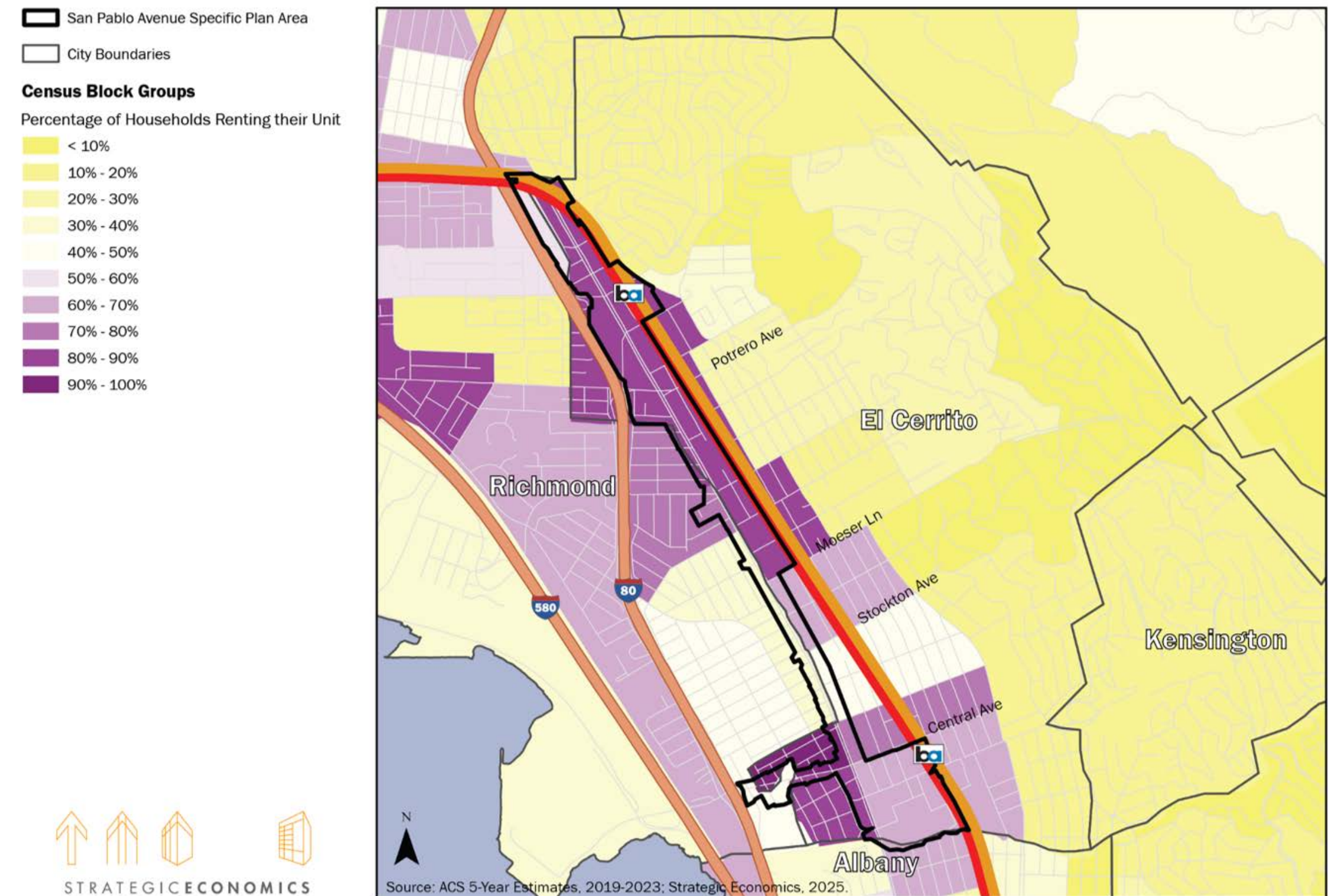


Sources: 2012 American Community Survey (3-Year Estimate), 2017 El Cerrito Affordable Housing Strategy, City of El Cerrito – Building Permit Data

Background: Existing Rental Housing

- Population of nearly 26,000 residents
- Residential Housing Units: 11,177
- Occupancy Tenure:
 - 57% owner-occupied
 - 43% renter occupied
- Existing and new **affordable housing** is in the Plan Area along/around San Pablo Avenue
- Existing **Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing** (NOAH) is located outside Plan Area clustered around BART
- NOAH encompasses older, privately owned, market-rate rental housing that offers lower rents compared to newer market rate units.

Percentage of Renter Households by Census Block Group in El Cerrito, 2023



Current: Deed Restricted Affordable Housing Inventory



Name	Address	Total Units	Income-Restricted Units	Location	Target Group	Expiration of Affordability
Hana Gardens Senior	10860 San Pablo Avenue	63	63	Plan Area	Senior Housing	2071
Metro 510	510 El Cerrito Plaza	128	19	Plan Area	Low and Moderate Incomes	2072
Ohlone Gardens	6431 Portola Drive	57	56	Plan Area	Special Needs Housing	2069
Village at Town Center	10810 San Pablo Avenue	158	24	Plan Area	Low and Moderate Incomes	2035
Del Norte Place	11720 San Pablo Avenue	135	27	Plan Area	Very Low and Low Income	2042
Hazel Shirley Manor	11025 San Pablo Avenue	63	63	Plan Area	Seniors, Mobility-Impaired Adult Housing	2031
Idaho Apartments	10203 San Pablo Avenue	29	28	Plan Area	Formerly Homeless, Disabled, Special Needs Housing	2072
1715 Elm Street	1715 Elm Street	16	2	Outside Plan Area	Moderate Income	Est. 2070
Elora Apartments	11690 San Pablo Avenue	69	68	Plan Area	Family	2081
Total		718	350			

Source: City of El Cerrito, 2025; Strategic Economics, 2025.

Affordable Housing Actions Since Specific Plan Adoption:

#1 Inclusionary Housing Policy

- The City adopted the Inclusionary Housing Zoning Ordinance in 2018 [El Cerrito Municipal Code 19.30](#) (see requirements below)
- Various modifications to ordinance were made between in [2020](#), [2021](#) and most recently in [2025](#) in response to market conditions
- MTC TOC Policy compliance requires that **15 percent** of rental and for-sale project units be affordable to low-income households, with some exceptions

Rental Projects				
Minimum Project Size	% Affordable	Affordability Target	Affordability Term	In-Lieu Fee
10 units	10%	1/2: Low-Income Households (80% AMI); 1/2: Moderate-Income Households (120% AMI)	55 years	\$21.00: May be paid for all or any portion of the inclusionary units required, including fractional units

For-Sale Projects				
Minimum Project Size	% Affordable	Affordability Target	Affordability Term	In-Lieu Fee
9 units	12%	Moderate-Income Households (120% AMI)	45 years	\$26.00: May be paid only for fractional units when the fraction is less than one-half

Affordable Housing Actions Since Specific Plan Adoption: #2 City Contributions to Affordable Housing Developments

El Cerrito's support for affordable housing includes funding and land contributions

Pre-Dissolution: Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Asset Fund (LMIHAF) through City Redevelopment Agency provided approximately \$4.2M in loans for affordable housing

Post-Dissolution: Mayfair Block sold at fair market value to market-rate developer

- Portion of the land donated by market-rate developer to non-profit affordable housing developer

Post Dissolution:

- **\$350K** Pre-development loans local match to Elora, El Cerrito Plaza BART TOD (Phases 1 & 2) from the LMIHAF
- City funding contributions and coordination with partners attract additional outside funding

Elora and El Cerrito Plaza TOD

- Infill Infrastructure Grant: \$20M
- Affordable Housing Sustainable Communities (AHSC): \$60M
- Hope VI Main Street Grant: \$500K
- Prohousing Incentive Program (PIP): \$620K

El Cerrito Plaza BART Transit-Oriented Development Rendering



Affordable Housing: Current Challenges

Inclusionary Zoning

- No affordable housing units have been built to-date under the City's inclusionary housing policy due to broader development feasibility challenges
- The City implemented temporary reductions of inclusionary/in-lieu requirements for four projects under building permit review through Project Kickstart



City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund

- After contributing \$350,000 each to Elora Apartments and El Cerrito Plaza TOD (Phases I & II), \$95,000 remains in the City's Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Asset Fund
- Project Kickstart, which reduces in-lieu fees for residential projects under building permit review, would result in an approximately \$867,000 infusion into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund if all four were to be completed



Potential Affordable Housing Policy Review

Based on needs identified in coordination with City staff, Strategic Economics examined four additional potential tools to support affordable housing production and protection

The findings in this section explain how each tool or policy works, provides examples of their use, and describes applicability to El Cerrito



Local Housing Bond Measures



Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District



General Fund Affordable Housing Allocations



Tenant/Community Opportunity to Purchase Act

Affordable Housing: Potential Policy Tools

Potential Policy Tools

1. **Local Housing Bond Measures:** Typically structured as general obligation bonds that are backed by new property tax assessments
2. **Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD)** A tax increment financing tool that can fund a wide range of public improvements, including Affordable Housing
3. **General Fund Revenue Allocations** a portion of the General Fund revenue allocated to affordable housing
4. **Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA)** is an affordable housing preservation policy designed to establish a first right of refusal for tenants and/or nonprofit organizations to purchase specified types of residential buildings when they are being offered for sale

Considerations

- As affordable housing **bonds** require significant public resources, the jurisdictions that initiate them are typically larger and/or more urban than El Cerrito
- An **EIFD's** ability to raise revenue depends on the volume and rate of development driving incremental property tax revenue growth
- Based on current resources, the City might only consider contributions to the **Affordable Housing Trust Fund** after all current funding needs are met and reserves are adequate levels
- As most of El Cerrito's NOAH housing lies outside the Plan Area, a **TOPA** policy would be most effective if adopted for the whole City and complemented by tenant support resources

Affordable Housing Takeaways

1. Existing affordable housing projects built in El Cerrito required Redevelopment Agency/Housing Trust Fund support, which no longer exists
2. El Cerrito will need to identify and adopt **new funding mechanisms** to produce affordable housing now that its Affordable Housing Trust Fund is nearly depleted
3. Current development conditions limit the short-term efficacy of affordable housing funding/production measures that **rely on market-rate development activity** (Inclusionary Housing)
4. Market-rate housing development can contribute to the City's Trust Fund by option to pay in-lieu fees to comply with the inclusionary housing policy. **Temporary adjustments** to the City's Inclusionary Housing requirements (such as Project Kickstart) may be considered across the City

Full Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy Report

The full Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy Report can be found on the City's website [here](https://elcerrito.gov/AffordableHousingStrategy) at elcerrito.gov/AffordableHousingStrategy

Questions, Answers and Discussion

