

## **Planning Commission Staff Report**

February 11, 2021

**Subject:** Eastern Gateway Study Vision and Zoning District Approach Study Session

### **Staff Recommendation**

Receive the staff report and presentation, accept public comment, and provide feedback on the recommended Eastern Gateway Study Vision and Zoning District Approach (Attachment 1). This item is a study session and no formal action is requested at this time.

### **Project Background**

In 2017 the State of California established the Senate Bill 2 (SB2) grant program to fund local government planning efforts to streamline housing approvals and accelerate housing production. Benicia is using SB2 funds for the Eastern Gateway Study, which focuses on approximately 13.5 acres near the intersection of Military East and East Fifth Street. The Eastern Gateway Study will create a new mixed-use zoning district that accommodates new housing and would streamline housing development that is consistent with new objective zoning and design standards.

#### *Study Area Boundary*

Figure 1 shows the Eastern Gateway Study Area boundary, which includes a primary and secondary study area. Most of the primary study area is zoned General Commercial (CG) and contains a mix of commercial and residential uses. The secondary study area is zoned residential and contains single-family homes, a church, and several multifamily properties.

Figure 1: Eastern Gateway Study Area



### *Project Process and Schedule*

The Eastern Gateway Study includes the following five main tasks:

- Task 1: Project Initiation. Document existing conditions and receive preliminary public input on key issues (completed in September 2020).
- Task 2: Issues and Options. Develop options to address key issues and select preferred approach (to be completed in February 2021).
- Task 3: Draft Amendments. Prepare General Plan and Zoning Code amendments (to be completed in June 2021).

- Task 4: Environmental Review. Evaluate potential environmental impacts of the project as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (to be completed in July 2021).
- Task 5: Final Amendments. Prepare and adopt final General Plan and Zoning Code amendments (to be completed in January 2022).

### *Existing Conditions Maps*

The City began the Eastern Gateway Study by preparing existing conditions maps for the study area (posted under the “Project Documents” heading on the project website at [www.ci.benicia.ca.us/easterngateway](http://www.ci.benicia.ca.us/easterngateway)). The existing conditions maps provide background information relevant to the vision and zoning district approach described in this document. The maps show existing land uses, development conditions, general plan designations and zoning, street conditions, and pedestrian and bicycle conditions in the study area.

### *Stakeholder Meetings*

The City invited a group of community members to attend the first stakeholder meeting on August 19, 2020. These individuals included study area property owners, business owners, affordable housing developers, architects, housing professionals, service providers, and residents. At this meeting stakeholders reviewed the existing conditions of the study area and identified important issues that the project would need to address. The City invited stakeholders for a second meeting on November 18, 2020 where they provided preliminary feedback on the recommended zoning district approach. Summaries of stakeholder feedback are provided on the project website.

### *Walking Tour*

On September 23, 2020 the City hosted a self-guided walking tour for the Eastern Gateway Study. Staff and consultants answered questions from participants and passed out walking tour brochures. This brochure and a “virtual walking tour” video were posted on the project website to encourage participation by those who were unable to attend on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Participants provided feedback by submitting the walking tour brochures with written comments, emailing comments to City staff, or answering questions online through the City’s Open Town Hall public comment forum. All public comment received is provided in the walking tour summary posted on the project website.

### *Virtual Workshop and Benicia Town Hall*

On January 21, 2021 the City hosted an interactive virtual workshop via Zoom to receive public input on a draft vision statement and recommended approach to a new mixed-use zoning district for the study area. Prior to the workshop, the City posted YouTube videos describing the vision statement and project approach and a series of documents containing project background information, draft vision statement, and recommended zoning district approach (Attachment 1).

A total of 41 people participated in the virtual workshop. Following a presentation by the project consultants, participants provided feedback on a variety of topics, in small groups of 4-6 participants, which were shared to the larger group (Attachment 2).

Topics discussed included including allowed uses, building height, project approvals, and parking. After the workshop, participants were offered an opportunity to submit further comment through the Benicia Town Hall on-line discussion forum or via email. Individuals who are interested in the project, but were unable to attend on January 21<sup>st</sup> were encouraged to review posted videos and content and provide feedback to the City via Benicia Town Hall or email. A total of 18 residents visited the Open Town Hall discussion forum and 6 people provided responses by February 1, 2021. The City received 5 emails with comments on the workshop material. Benicia Town Hall and email comments are provided as Attachment 3. The City continues to accept feedback on the vision and approach document through Benicia Town Hall and email.

### **Study Area Vision and Zoning District Approach**

At the February 11<sup>th</sup> study session, staff is requesting Planning Commission feedback on the draft vision and zoning approach document for the study area, including the four topic areas outlined further in the body of this report.

#### *Study Area Vision*

The draft vision for the future of the Eastern Gateway Study reflects public input received from the walking tour and stakeholder meetings and is consistent with the goal of accommodating additional housing in the study area. Photographs illustrate the general vision and are not specific development proposals or recommendations. The vision statement describes the outcome the City aims to achieve in the study area through the new mixed-use zoning district.

At the virtual workshop, participants generally supported the study area vision statement describing new housing in the study area, additional neighborhood-serving commercial uses, infill development designed to fit into the surrounding neighborhood, and safety enhancements for pedestrians and bicyclists. Some participants suggested revisions to the vision statement, such as adding statements about adequate vehicle parking, public art and Benicia's small-town character. All workshop comments on the vision statement are provided in Attachment 2.

#### *Zoning District Approach*

The City will create a new mixed-use zoning district to implement the study area vision. The zoning district will contain new rules for allowed land uses, development/design standards, and required permits for various uses in the study area.

Workshop materials included a recommendation for how to approach the new mixed-use zoning district, focusing on the following four topics:

1. Allowed Land Uses
2. Building Height
3. Project Approvals
4. Parking

At the virtual workshop, there was general consensus in support of allowing multifamily uses in the study area. Reaction to the other recommendations was more mixed, as

reflected in the virtual workshop summary (Attachment 2). Additional public input provide through Benicia Town Hall and emails to staff (Attachment 3) was similar to the workshop input.

In light of this public feedback, staff and consultants have identified additional options for the zoning district approach. The Planning Commission may wish to consider these additional options when providing feedback on the zoning district approach. Some options may not be mutually exclusive.

For each of the four topics discussed at the workshop, the discussion below presents the original recommendation, summarizes workshop input, and lists additional options for the Planning Commission to consider in light of this input.

## **1. Allowed Land Uses**

Workshop Recommendation: Add multifamily housing as an allowed use in both the primary and secondary study areas.

This approach maximizes allowed land use flexibility in the study area. Along Military East and East Fifth Street, mixed-use development would be encouraged but not required, commercial-only development would continue to be allowed, and single-use multifamily residential would be added as an allowed use. In the secondary study area, multifamily would be added as an allowed use, but commercial and mixed-use development would continue to not be allowed.

Workshop Input: Workshop participants expressed support for adding multifamily and mixed-use residential uses as allowed uses in the study area. Some participants recommended identifying locations where ground-floor commercial uses are required, or limiting the amount of new residential-only development in the primary study area in an effort to maintain the presence of commercial uses on Military East and East Fifth. It was also suggested that we perform a market analysis of the area to determine how much retail space could be accommodated. Additionally, participants recommended limiting new multifamily uses in the secondary study area to duplexes, triplexes, and other smaller-scale multifamily housing types.

### Other Options:

- 1-A: Require ground floor commercial in certain locations, such as parcels fronting on Military East or the East Fifth Street/Military East Intersection.
- 1-B: Require that a certain amount or percentage of commercial floor area remains in the study area (e.g., maximum ratio of residential to commercial/mixed use properties).
- 1-C: Limit allowed multifamily uses in secondary study area to duplexes, triplexes, and other smaller-scale multifamily housing types.

## 2. Building Height

Workshop Recommendation: Incentivize housing production by allowing increased height for multifamily and mixed-use development. In addition, require new development to conform with new objective design standards to increase neighborhood compatibility, avoid the appearance of monolithic blocks, and complement Benicia's existing character.

In most of the primary study area, the current height limitation is 40 feet, which allows up to three story buildings. The recommendation would allow for up to four stories for multifamily and mixed-use residential development in the primary study area.

Workshop Input: Workshop participants expressed a range of opinions on allowed building heights. Some participants supported building heights of three stories or less to maintain Benicia's existing small-town feel. Other participants thought a limited number of four-story buildings in certain locations might be acceptable. Some participants supported buildings taller than four stories to maximize new housing development opportunities in the study area.

### Other Options:

- 2-A: Maintain existing allowed heights (40' in Primary Study Area; 30/35' in Secondary Study Area).
- 2-B: Increase allowable height in Primary Study Area to accommodate four-story buildings, but limit this height increase to certain parts of the study area or allow only through a discretionary process with special findings.
- 2-C: Allow an additional story for projects that provide a defined community benefit (e.g., public open space, affordable housing, enhanced design features).
- 2-D: Allow five or more stories in some locations.

## 3. Project Approvals

Workshop Recommendation: Allow by-right all multifamily and mixed-use projects that comply with objective standards.

Allowing a project "by-right" means that City staff would approve a project if it conforms to all applicable objective standards. The project would not require a Design Review application, review by the Historic Preservation Review Commission, or a public hearing. This approach would encourage investment in the study area and production of new housing by shortening the development timeline and providing certainty about the City's requirements and expectations to the developer.

Workshop Input: Many virtual workshop participants expressed concerns with by-right approvals. Concerns included loss of public hearings, neighbors being unaware of pending development, impact of infill development on established neighborhood

character and the type of development that would be allowed by new standards. The meaning of by-right approvals was also unclear to some participants.

Other Options:

- 3-A: Allow by-right only certain types of projects (e.g., senior housing, affordable housing, projects that provide a defined community benefit, smaller-scale projects).
- 3-B: Require enhanced public notice and neighborhood outreach for any by-right approval.
- 3-C: Continue to require Design Review for all multifamily and commercial development, but require that approval occur within a specified timeframe if project conforms to objective standards.

#### **4. Parking**

Workshop Recommendation: Explore parking regulations and tools for the study area that support the study area vision while minimizing adverse parking impacts on neighborhood residents.

Prototype modeling indicated that existing parking requirements could significantly limit development potential of opportunity sites in the study area. This recommendation reflects these findings and also recognizes that study area residents and neighbors are concerned about existing parking conditions and potential parking impacts from new development.

Workshop Input: Many virtual workshop participants continued to express concerns about existing parking problems in and around the study area and the potential for new development to exacerbate these problems. Some participants also expressed the desire for the City to reduce on-site parking requirements to facilitate increased infill development.

Other Options:

- 4-A: Maintain existing off-street parking requirements in Zoning Code Chapter 17.74 (1.2 to 2.0 spaces per unit for multifamily based on number of bedrooms; 1 per 200 sq. ft for retail uses 5,000 sq. ft. or less).
- 4-B: Reduce off-street parking requirements for residential and/or commercial uses
- 4-C: Accommodate angled and parallel parking in excess right-of-way (appx. 8' to 20') that adjoins current roadways, where appropriate to traffic conditions and compatible with bicycle and pedestrian safety. Figure 2 shows what this could look like.



*Figure 2: Mixed-Use Model with Added On-street Parking in Public Right-of-way*



**Next Steps:**

The City Council will hold a study session on March 16, 2021 to consider the Planning Commission's feedback and provide direction to City staff on the recommended vision and zoning district approach. Based on this direction, the City will prepare the draft zoning district regulations for public review and comment in Spring 2021.

**Attachments:**

1. Vision and Zoning District Approach Document
2. Virtual Workshop and Feedback Summary

*For more information contact: Danielle Crider, Associate Planner  
Phone: 707.746.4324  
E-mail: [dcrider@ci.benicia.ca.us](mailto:dcrider@ci.benicia.ca.us)*



# EASTERN GATEWAY STUDY VISION AND ZONING DISTRICT APPROACH



**CITY OF BENICIA**  
**JANUARY 2021**





## Contents

I. PROJECT BACKGROUND .....	1
II. STUDY AREA VISION .....	3
III. ZONING DISTRICT APPROACH .....	6
1. Allowed Land Uses .....	6
2. Building Height .....	9
3. Project Approvals .....	15
4. Parking.....	15

### **Attachments:**

- A. Existing Conditions Maps
- B. Stakeholder Group Meeting Comments
- C. Walking Tour Summary

*This page is intentionally blank*

This document presents a vision for the Eastern Gateway Study Area and a recommended approach to a new mixed-use zoning district for the area. The City will use this document to receive public feedback on this vision and zoning district approach. The Planning Commission and City Council will consider this feedback when providing direction to City staff and consultants at study sessions planned for early 2021.

This document contains the following sections:

- I. **Project Background:** Information on the project purpose, process, schedule, completed tasks, and next steps.
- II. **Study Area Vision:** Text and photographs that present a vision for the study area based on public input.
- III. **Zoning District Approach:** A recommended approach to the new zoning district that will implement the study area vision.

Attached to this document are existing conditions maps, stakeholder group meeting comments, and a walking tour summary.

## **I. PROJECT BACKGROUND**

### Project Purpose and Origin

In 2017 the State of California established the Senate Bill 2 (SB2) grant program to fund city planning that streamlines housing approvals and accelerates housing production. Benicia is using SB2 funds for the Eastern Gateway Study, which focuses on approximately 13.5 acres near the intersection of Military East and East Fifth Street. The Eastern Gateway Study will create a new mixed-use zone district that allows by-right housing development when that development is consistent with new objective zoning and design standards.

### Study Area Boundary

Figure 1 shows the Eastern Gateway Study Area boundary, which includes a primary and secondary study area. Most of the primary study area is zoned General Commercial and contains a mix of commercial and residential uses. The secondary study area is zoned residential and contains single-family homes, a church, and several small multifamily properties.

### Project Process and Schedule

The Eastern Gateway Study includes the following five main tasks:

- **Task 1: Project Initiation.** Document existing conditions and receive preliminary public input on key issues (completed in September 2020).

- **Task 2: Issues and Options.** Develop options to address key issues and select preferred approach (to be completed in February 2021).
- **Task 3: Draft Amendments.** Prepare General Plan and Zoning Code amendments (to be completed in June 2021).
- **Task 4: Environmental Review.** Evaluate potential environmental impacts of the project as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (to be completed in July 2021).
- **Task 5: Final Amendments.** Prepare and adopt final General Plan and Zoning Code amendments (to be completed in January 2022).

**Figure 1: Eastern Gateway Study Area**





### Existing Conditions Maps

The City began the Eastern Gateway Study by preparing existing conditions maps for the study area (see Attachment A). These maps provide background information relevant to the vision and zoning district approach described in this document. The maps show existing land use, development conditions, general plan designations and zoning, street conditions, and pedestrian and bicycle conditions in the study area.

### Stakeholder Meetings

The City invited a group of project stakeholders to attend the first stakeholder meeting on August 19, 2020. These stakeholders included study area property owners, business owners, developers, architects, housing professionals, service providers, and residents. At this meeting stakeholders reviewed the existing conditions and identified important project issues. The City invited stakeholders for a second meeting on November 18, 2020 where they provided preliminary feedback on the recommended zoning district approach. Summaries of stakeholder feedback is provided in Attachment B.

### Walking Tour

On September 23, 2020 the City hosted a self-guided walking tour for the Eastern Gateway Study. The City also posted a “virtual walking tour” video on the project website. Residents provided feedback by submitting the walking tour brochures with written comments, emailing comments to City staff, or answering questions on-line through the City’s Open Town Hall public comment forum. Public comments received are provided in the walking tour summary (Attachment C).

### Next Steps

The City will hold a virtual workshop on January 21, 2021 to receive public feedback on the vision and zoning district approach in this document. The Planning Commission and City Council will hold study sessions in early 2021 to receive additional public input and provide direction on the preferred approach. After receiving direction from the City Council, the City will begin drafting the General Plan and Zoning Code amendments.

## **II. STUDY AREA VISION**

The following pages present a vision for the future of the Eastern Gateway Study Area. This vision reflects public input received from the walking tour and stakeholder meetings and is consistent with the goal of accommodating additional housing in the study area. Photographs illustrate the general vision and are not specific development proposals or recommendations. The vision statement describes the outcomes the City aims to achieve in the study area through the new mixed-use zoning district.

## A VISION FOR THE EASTERN GATEWAY STUDY AREA

The Eastern Gateway Study Area contains a mix of housing, shops, and service businesses that support a diverse and thriving community. It contains a variety of housing types, which are affordable to a range of household incomes and include workforce housing, senior housing, and a mix of renter- and owner-occupied units. Mixed-use development with multifamily units above neighborhood-serving ground floor commercial uses on Military East and East Fifth Streets encourages community activity and promotes a strong sense of neighborhood. New affordable housing development is not solely located in the study area, as it is the City's goal to distribute affordable housing throughout Benicia and not to concentrate it in one part of the City.



*Mixed-use development with housing above ground floor commercial (top left photo), townhomes (top right photo) and four-unit infill on a small parcel (bottom right photo).*

The study area accommodates additional housing in a way that enhances Benicia's unique community identity. Higher-density development is carefully designed to fit into and complement its surrounding context. There is a variety of building heights, building sizes, and architectural details that create visual interest and provide a diversity of building forms. Architectural styles are varied, yet consistent with Benicia's historic identity. New development includes landscaping, courtyards, outdoor seating, and other amenities for the use and enjoyment of residents.



*Existing development in Benicia with publicly-accessible outdoor courtyard seating (left photo). Variation in building forms, massing, colors, and materials create visual interest (right photo).*

The study area is an attractive and welcoming gateway into Benicia. It safely accommodates all modes of travel, including private vehicles, bus transit, bicyclists, and pedestrians. High quality bicycle and pedestrian improvements increase transportation choices and support healthy lifestyles. Area residents can easily walk, bike, or take transit to nearby jobs, services, and activities. Street trees, wide sidewalks, lighting and other public realm improvements enhance livability for residents and encourage long-term and sustained private investment in buildings and properties.



*High-visibility pedestrian crosswalk (left photo) and protected bicycle lane (right photo).*

### III. ZONING DISTRICT APPROACH

The City will create a new mixed-use zoning district to implement the study area vision described above. The mixed-use zoning district will contain new rules for allowed land uses, development standards, and required permits for the study area. The City could also choose to apply the new zoning district to other areas in the city as part of a separate rezoning process.

Below are recommendations for how to approach the new mixed-use zoning district, focusing on the following four topics:

- Allowed Land Uses
- Building Height
- Project Approvals
- Parking

For each of these topics, the discussion below describes existing rules in the study area and a recommended approach for the new mixed-use zoning district.

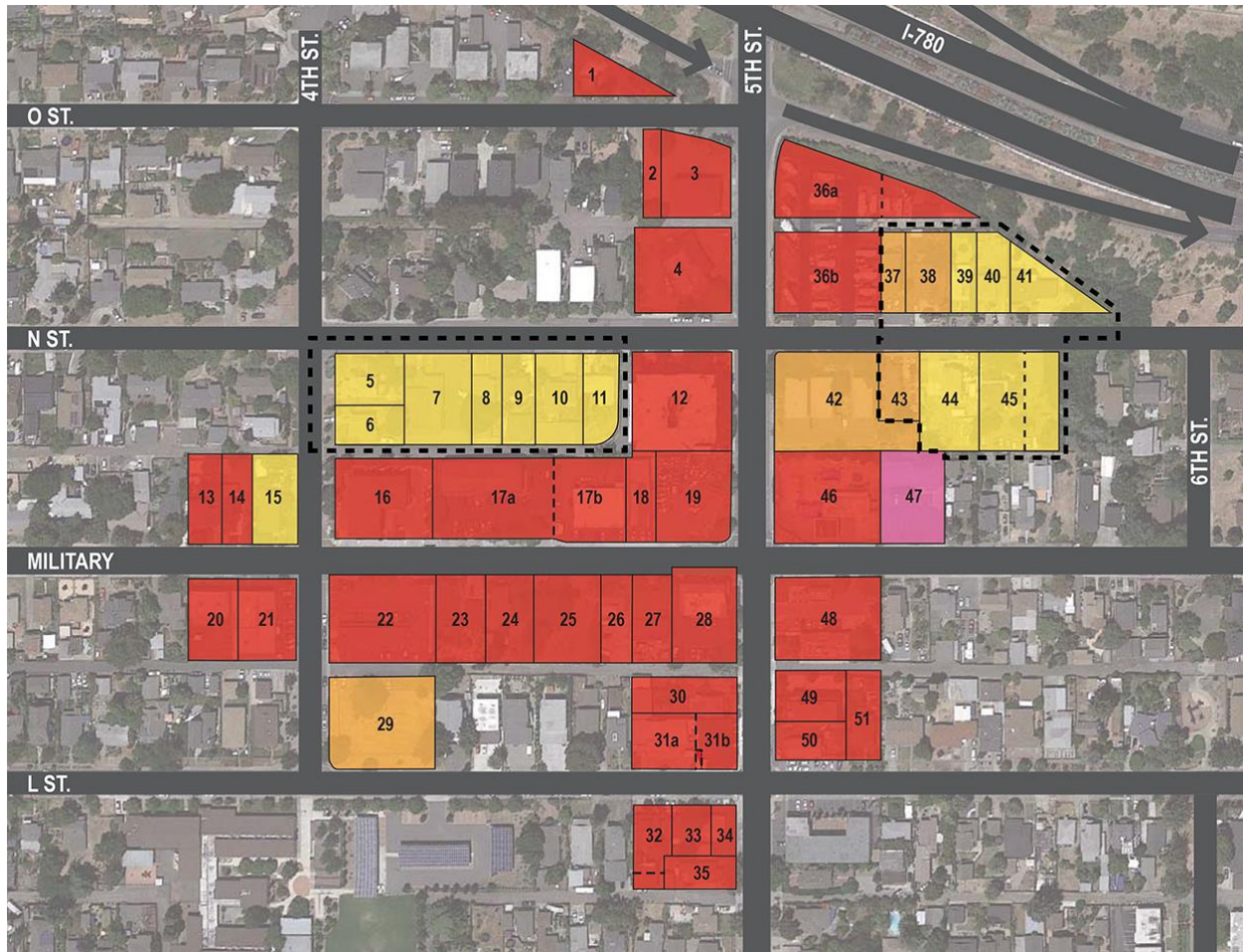
#### 1. Allowed Land Uses




**Existing Rules:** In most of the primary study area, the only residential uses currently allowed are group residential and work/live quarters (see Figure 2). Multifamily uses above the ground floor (mixed-use) are allowed on Parcel 47. Multifamily residential (without a ground floor commercial use) is allowed on Parcels 29 and 42. In the secondary study area, multifamily is allowed on three parcels on East N Street. All other parcels in the secondary study area may only be developed with single-family residences and accessory dwelling units.

Group residential means shared living quarters without separate kitchen or bathroom facilities for each room or unit, including boarding houses, dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and private residential clubs. Work/live means “one or more rooms or floors in a building originally designed for industrial or commercial occupancy that includes cooking space and sanitary facilities and working space for artists, artisans and similarly situated individuals.”



**FIGURE 2: EXISTING ALLOWED RESIDENTIAL USES**



- |   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
|  | Multifamily including ground floor (single use)      |  | Residential allowed only as Group Residential or Work/Live |
|  | Multifamily over ground floor commercial (mixed use) |  | Multifamily not allowed                                    |

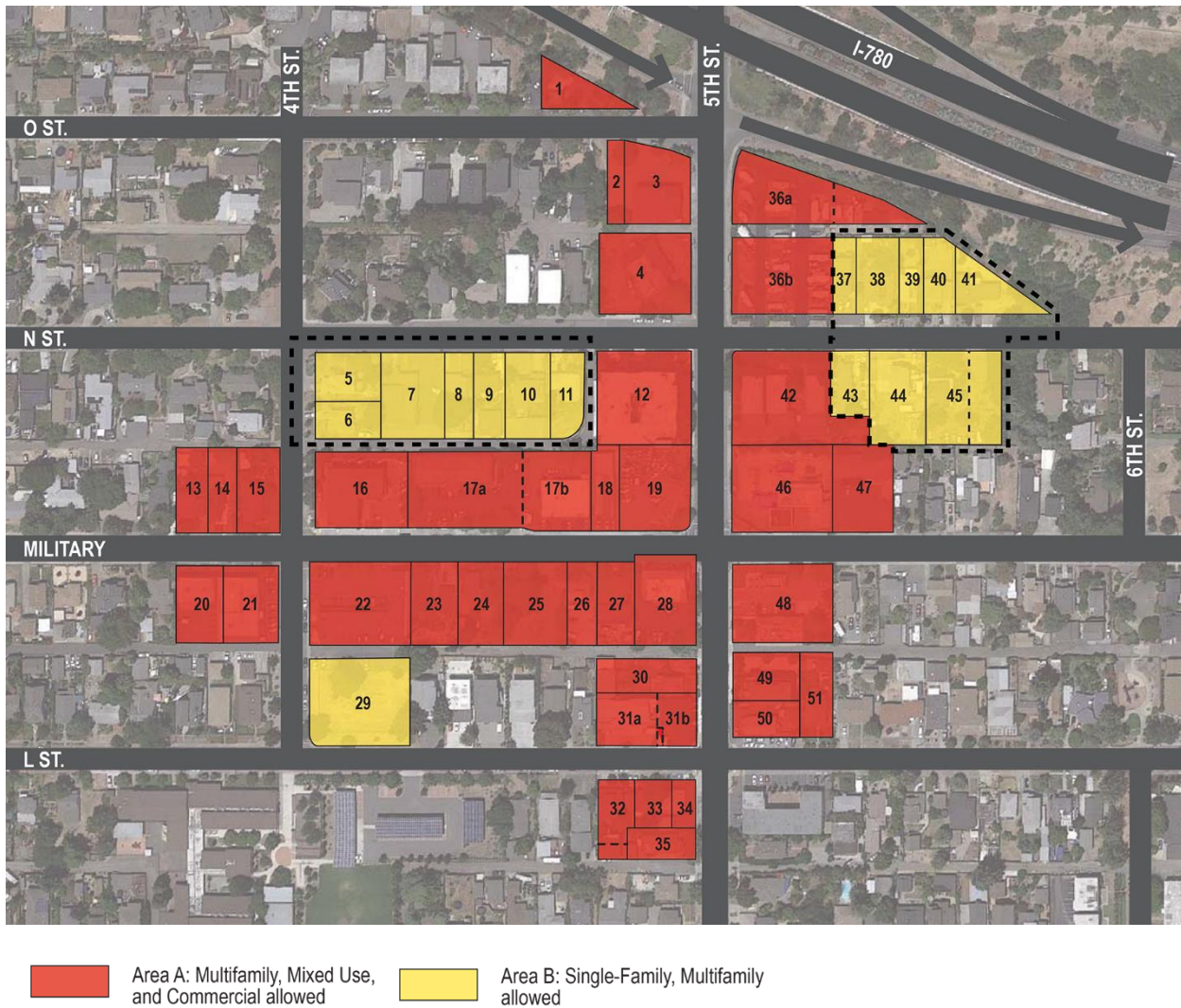
**Recommendation:** Add multifamily housing as an allowed use in both the primary and the secondary study area (See Table 1 and Figure 3). In the primary study area (excluding Parcel 29), multifamily, mixed-use, and commercial-only land uses will be allowed. As described in the Building Height section below, residential uses above ground floor commercial will be encouraged (but not required) by allowing additional building height for mixed-use development. Allowed uses for Parcel 29 would remain the same (multifamily allowed; single-family allowed; commercial prohibited). Multifamily development in the secondary study area must be of a scale and character consistent with existing single-family homes in the area, as addressed in the Building Height section below. Single-family homes may continue to be built in the secondary study area.

**TABLE 1: RECOMMENDED ALLOWED USES**

	Area A	Area B
Single-family Homes	Not allowed*	Allowed
Multifamily (no commercial on parcel)	Allowed	Allowed
Mixed-Use (residential above commercial)	Allowed	Not allowed
Commercial (no residential on parcel)	Allowed	Not allowed

\*Existing single-family homes may remain.

**FIGURE 3: RECOMMENDED ALLOWED RESIDENTIAL USES**



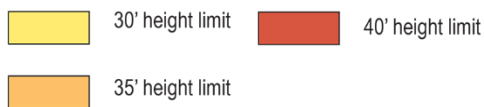
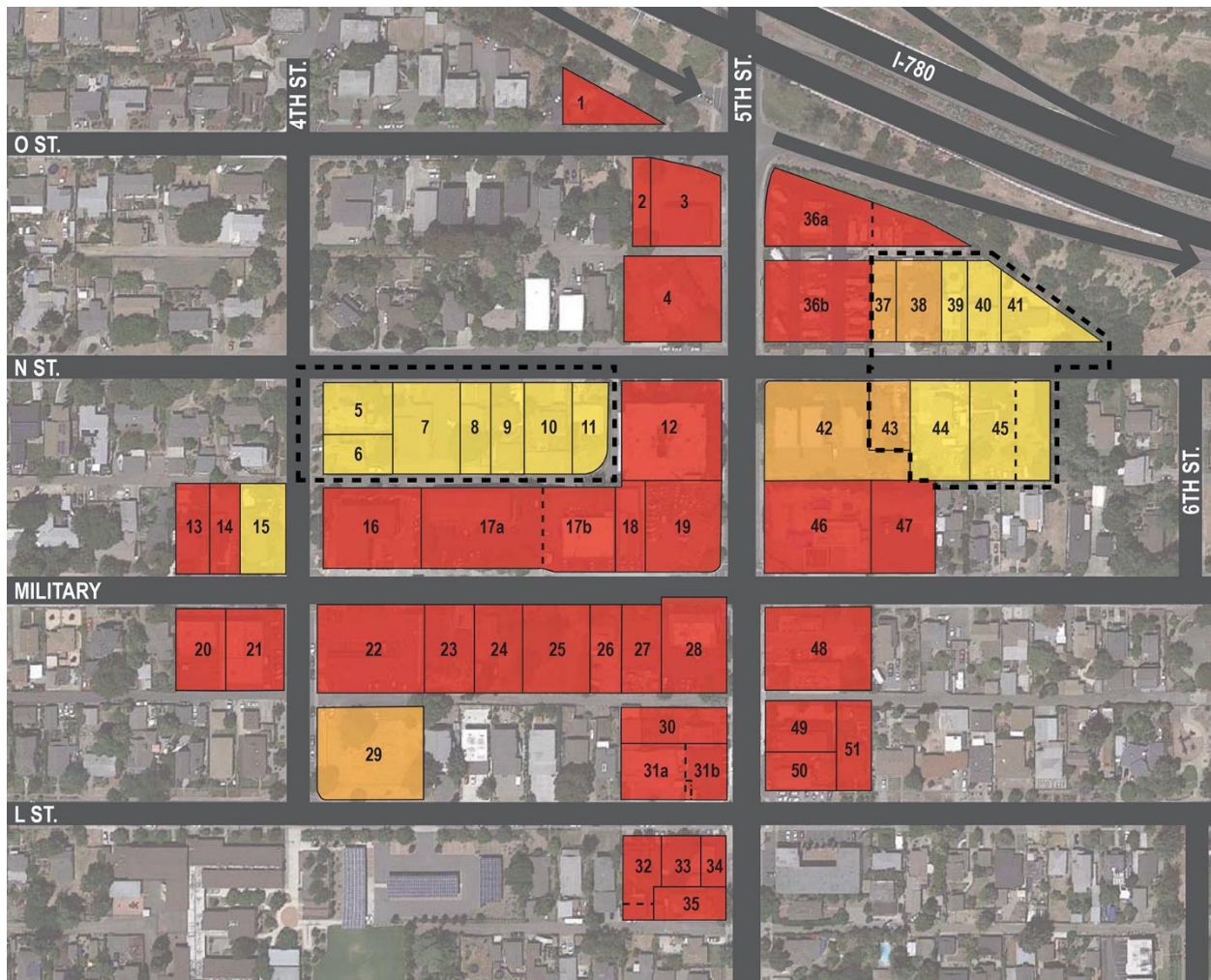


## 2. Building Height

Public input from the walking tour and stakeholder group emphasized a desire for new development that appears to fit into and complement its surroundings. Residents commented that the height of buildings should not overwhelm nearby buildings, should not be overly imposing, and should be of a scale appropriate for Benicia.

**Existing Rules:** As shown in Figure 4, buildings up to 40 feet are allowed in most of the primary study area, except for two parcels allowing 35 feet and one parcel allowing 30 feet. Most parcels in the secondary study area allow up to 30 feet, with three parcels allowing 35 feet.

**FIGURE 4: EXISTING ALLOWED BUILDING HEIGHT**



As a frame of reference, Figure 5 shows the height of two existing buildings in the study area.

**FIGURE 5: EXAMPLE BUILDING HEIGHTS**



**Medical Office Building, 1208 Fifth Street**  
Approx. 38-40 ft.



**Holiday Inn Express, 1375 Fifth Street**  
39 ft. at corner element; 32 ft. adjacent building wall

**Recommendation:** Incentivize housing production by allowing increased height for multifamily and mixed-use development. For example, continue to allow up to 3 stories for single-use residential and commercial development, but allow up to 4 stories for mixed-use residential buildings. An extra story of commercial space in a mixed-use project would not add residential units to a project, but it could make a project financially feasible and provide services or amenities to the community.

In addition, require new development to conform with new objective design standards to increase neighborhood compatibility, avoid the appearance of monolithic blocks, and complement Benicia's existing character. Standards to achieve these outcomes may include the following:

- **Height transitions:** If the building height is significantly greater than an adjacent building, require design features that minimize the appearance of abrupt changes in building scale.
- **Adjacent residential transitions:** Require a reduced building height for the portion of a building adjacent to an existing single-family home.
- **Maximum facade length:** Require vertical facade breaks for long building facades.
- **Building height variation:** Limit the length of a building facade that may be above a certain height.
- **Facade articulation:** Require facade articulation techniques such as material and color changes, vertical accent lines, wall modulation, balconies, and projecting windows.
- **Street trees and landscaping:** Require new street trees and landscaping along the building frontage.

Photographs below illustrate these possible design standards.





*Third floor of living area built into pitched roof element to reduce appearance of height.*



*Lower building height and landscaped buffer adjacent to existing single-family home.*



*Long building divided into multiple narrow facade styles.*



*Variation in building heights, facade articulation, landscaped setback, and street trees.*



*Street-facing building articulation with material and color changes, wall modulations, and awnings.*



*Landscaped setback and street trees.*

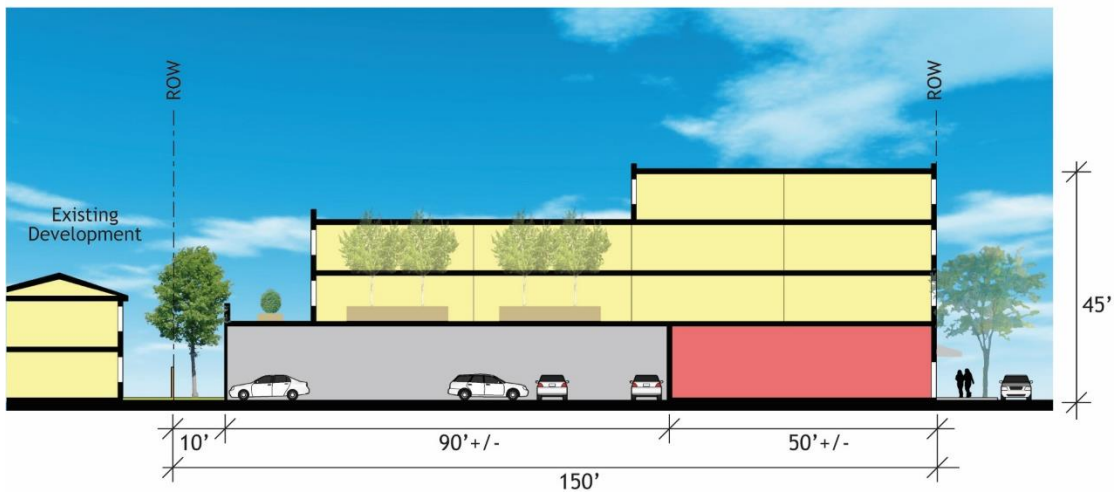
The City is currently preparing 3D models to illustrate potential development in the new mixed-use zoning district. These models test possible development standards and show the general scale of development allowed in the zoning district. Figure 7 shows a model for mixed-use residential development on an 18,750 square-foot corner parcel with four stories at the street, three stories next to an existing single-family home. This model also shows wall modulation along the primary street frontage, new street trees, on-site podium (structured) parking, and new on-street parking.

Figure 8 shows a model for mixed-use residential development on a 6,000 square-foot parcel with three stories at the street, a stepped-back fourth story at the street, and three stories facing an existing single-family home to the rear of the parcel. Vehicle access to surface and garage parking is provided from the rear alley.

**FIGURE 7: MIXED-USE MODEL ON 18,750 SQUARE-FOOT CORNER PARCEL**

**Development Summary**

- 18,750 sf lot
- 30 units (925 sf average)
- 6,000 sf commercial
- 1.8 FAR
- 34 parking spaces (1.1/du)
- Commercial parking on street

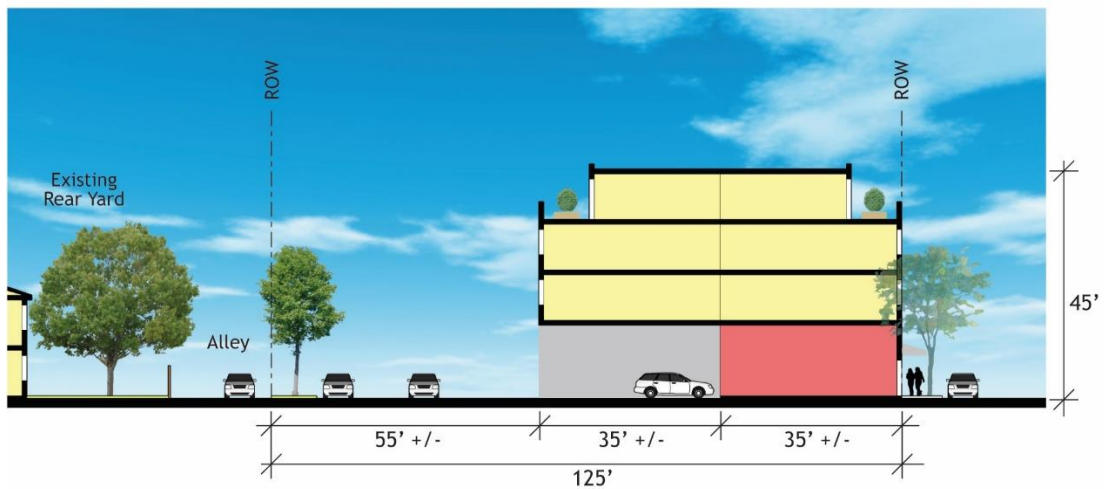




**FIGURE 8: MIXED-USE MODEL ON 6,000 SQUARE-FOOT PARCEL**

**Development Summary**

- 6,000 sf lot
- 10 units (920 sf average)
- 1,700 sf commercial
- 1.8 FAR
- 11 parking spaces (1.1/du)
- Commercial parking on street





### 3. Project Approvals

**Existing Rules:** All new construction except for single-family homes requires Design Review by the Historic Preservation Review Commission (HPRC). Design Review requires a noticed public hearing at which the HPRC may approve, approve with modifications, or deny a proposed project. Design Review is a discretionary action, meaning that HPRC members use personal judgement when acting on a proposed project.

**Recommendation:** Allow by-right all multifamily and mixed-use projects that comply with objective standards. This would include all age-restricted housing for seniors and residential care/assisting living facilities. Action on a proposed project would be ministerial, meaning that the City's decision to approve or deny the project involves little or no personal judgement. Instead, City staff would review the project for conformance with objective standards and approve the project if it complies with these standards.

A proposed multifamily or mixed-use residential project consistent with all objective standards would not require a Design Review application, review by the HPRC, or a public hearing. This approach would encourage investment in the study area and production of new housing by shortening the development timeline and providing certainty about the City's requirements and expectations.

A project proponent could request deviation from the objective standards subject to approval by staff, the HPRC, or Planning Commission. Non-residential uses in a mixed-use project that could impact neighbors, such as bars, would continue to require a Use Permit.

**Other Option:** Allow by-right only certain types of projects that the City wants to encourage, such as senior housing, affordable housing, or projects with specified community benefits. Require Design Review approval for all other projects.

### 4. Parking

Parking in the study area is a topic of considerable community interest. Public feedback from the walking tour and stakeholder meetings included concerns about existing parking shortages, the amount of on-site parking for new development, and design of new on-site parking facilities. At the same time, the public also supports increased housing and mixed-use development in the study area, which could be difficult to achieve with the amount of off-street parking currently required for new development.

**Existing Rules:** Table 2 shows the number of off-street parking spaces currently required for certain residential and commercial land uses in the study area. The Zoning Code allows the Community Development Director to reduce the number of required parking spaces for uses smaller than 2,000 square feet. The Planning Commission may reduce the number of required

parking spaces for uses greater than 2,000 square feet upon finding that the use will generate parking demand less than the spaces required by the Zoning Code.

**TABLE 2: EXISTING REQUIRED PARKING SPACES**

	Required Spaces
<b>Residential Uses</b>	
Multifamily Residential	
Studio	1.2 per unit
One or two bedrooms	1.5 per unit
Three or more bedrooms	2.0 per unit
Single-Family Residential	2 including one covered space
Senior Housing	0.5 per unit
<b>Commercial Uses</b>	
Eating and Drinking Establishments	1 per 4 fixed seats, or 1 per 50 sq. ft. of seating area if there are no fixed seats
Offices, Business and Professional	1 per 300 sq. ft.
Offices, Medical and Dental	1 per 250 sq. ft.
Personal Services	1 per 250 sq. ft.
Retail Sales	1 per 200 sq. ft. for less than 5,000 sq. ft.; 1 per 250 sq. ft. over 5,000 sq. ft.

**Recommendation:** Explore parking regulations and tools for the study area that support the study area vision while minimizing adverse parking impacts on neighborhood residents. Potential parking strategies would 1) increase the supply of public parking; 2) utilize available parking more efficiently; and 3) reduce the need for parking. Specific measures could include the following:

- Utilize excess right-of-way widths to increase the supply of street parking.
- Establish limits on new driveway entrances and curb cuts to preserve existing street parking.
- Encourage use of tandem parking spaces, parking lifts, and structured parking to increase the number of parking spaces that can fit on a development site.
- Encourage shared and joint use of existing off-street parking.

## EASTERN GATEWAY STUDY VISION AND APPROACH VIRTUAL WORKSHOP SUMMARY

### Virtual Workshop Background

On January 21, 2021 the City hosted a virtual workshop via Zoom for the Eastern Gateway Study. The purpose of this workshop was to receive public input on a draft vision statement and recommended approach to a new mixed-use zoning district for the study area. The City advertised the workshop with mailed postcard notices, email notifications, *Benicia This Week* announcements, and social media postings (facebook and nextdoor).

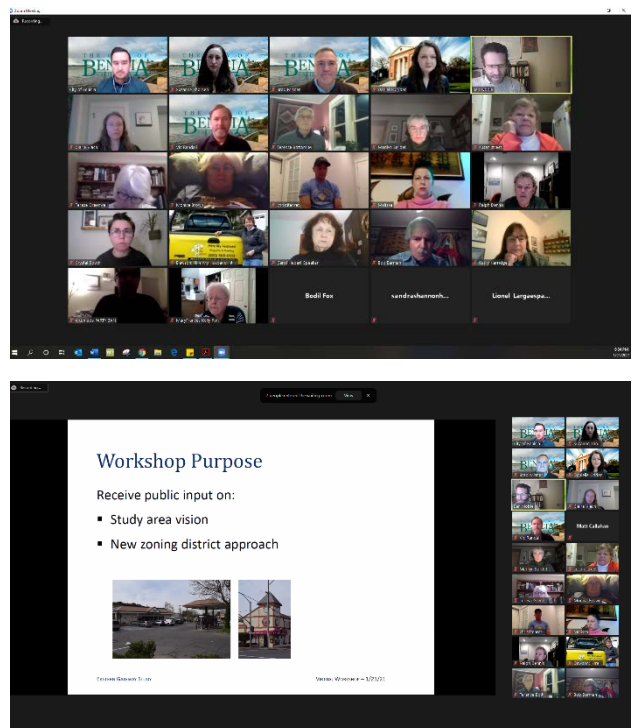
One week prior to the workshop, the City posted on the project website a document containing project background information, the draft vision statement, and the recommended zoning district approach. The City also posted videos presenting this material.

The virtual workshop began with a presentation by the project consultant providing background information and presenting the vision statement. Workshop participants were then randomly assigned to seven breakout rooms, each with 5-7 participants and a facilitator. Participants in the breakout room discussed whether the vision statement reflects their vision for the study area and if any changes should be made. After this discussion participants returned to the full group and a spokesperson for each group reported back on major themes from their group's discussion. The project consultant then presented the recommended zoning district approach, followed by another breakout room discussion and report back. Facilitators took notes of the breakout room discussions, which are attached to this summary.

In total, 41 people attended the virtual workshop. As of February 1, 2021, the vision statement video had 26 views and the recommended approach video was viewed 28 times. A total of 18 residents visited the Open Town Hall discussion forum and six people provided responses. In addition to the Open Town Hall comments, the City received five emails with comments on the workshop material before February 1, 2021. All public comments received by the City are attached to this summary.

### Workshop Feedback

Attached to this summary are written notes from the seven breakout rooms. A summary of major themes from all breakout groups combined is provided below.



### Vision Statement

In discussion of the study area vision statement, participants generally supported new housing in the study area, additional neighborhood-serving commercial uses, infill development designed to fit into the surrounding neighborhood, and safety enhancements for pedestrians and bicyclists. Some participants suggested revisions to the vision statement, such as adding statements about adequate vehicle parking, public art and Benicia's small-town character.

### Zoning District Approach

Aspects of the new zoning district approach discussed by the breakout rooms included allowed uses, building height, project approvals, and parking.

### Allowed Uses

Workshop participants expressed support for adding multifamily and mixed-use residential uses as allowed uses in the study area. Some participants recommended identifying locations where ground-floor commercial uses are required, or limiting the amount of new residential-only development in the primary study area in an effort to maintain the presence of commercial uses on Military East and East Fifth. Some participants also recommended limiting new multifamily uses in the secondary study area to duplexes, triplexes, and other smaller-scale multifamily housing types.

### Building Height

Workshop participants expressed a range of opinions on allowed building heights. Some participants supported building heights of three stories or less to maintain Benicia's existing small-town feel. Other participants thought a limited number of four-story buildings in certain locations might be acceptable. Some participants supported buildings taller than four stories to maximize new housing development opportunities in the study area.

### Project Approvals

Many virtual workshop participants expressed concern about by-right approvals. Concerns included loss of public hearings, neighbors being unaware of pending development, impact of infill development on established neighborhood character and the type of development that would be allowed by new standards. The meaning of by-right approvals was also unclear to some participants.

### Parking

Many virtual workshop participants continued to express concerns about existing parking problems in and around the study area and the potential for new development to exacerbate these problems. Some participants also expressed the desire for the City to reduce on-site parking requirements to facilitate increased infill development.

### **Attachments:**

1. Breakout Room Notes
2. Benicia Town Hall Responses
3. Emailed Comments

## Breakout Room 1 Notes

### Part 1, Vision

Group generally liked vision statement, with some additional comments:

- Needs to refer to “small town character”
- Housing should address gaps in sidewalks, flooding, parks; amenities needed with additional housing
- Distributing affordable housing is good
- Development should pay its own way; be self-sustaining with costs
- Encourage upgrades to existing buildings
- Don’t displace existing residents and businesses
- No urban renewal

### Part 2, Zoning District Approach

#### Allowed Uses

- Mixed-use is a hot topic. Impact of COVID. Market taking a dive for mixed-use
- Concerned about vacant commercial space. May limit mixed use to corners and high frequency areas
- This is best place in Benicia for new mixed use
- Don’t require mixed-use in all areas
- Marketability is most important
- Parcel 1 should be yellow
- Corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Military ground floor commercial should be required
- City should not set maximum density
- Consider required ratio of mixed use in study area
- Incorporate live/work as we transition out of COVID.

#### Building Height

- 4 stories okay
- Over 40 ft. inconsistent with small town character; oppose increased height; additional height not needed as an incentive
- Allow up to 6 stories
- Less than 4 stories is better; intimate neighborhood

#### Project Approvals

- Support approvals by-right: State is requiring it
- Concerned about by-right approvals

#### Parking

- Lower parking requirement

- Some parking needed with new development but a lot of development is overparked
- Traffic not a problem
- Adequate parking needed
- Prioritize non-motorized forms of transportation
- Parking on N Street is not a problem



## Breakout Room 2 Notes

### Part 1, Vision

The group was generally in agreement with the various elements of the vision statement.

#### Other major ideas expressed:

- Need for neighborhood serving personal services such as cafes/restaurants/personal retail
- Recreation and open space was identified as being important (Pleasant Hill transit station was referenced)
- This is an intimate neighborhood, where everyone knows everybody. This should not be the only area in the City that is identified for change.
- Belief that this is the oldest mobile home park in the State of California and the area has long-term residents and that any displacement would be a problem.
- Want to make sure there is vibrancy combined with housing for all including artists and at varying income levels.
- That history, the environment, and the arts should be encouraged in any new development. Also child care needs to be accommodated.
- Very important to clearly identify the existing neighborhood amenities, the plan needs to be from the people, and that there needs to be a level of flexibility (zoning could be too rigid).
- Bike friendly, coffee shop that allows bikers/pedestrians to still get a cup of coffee if they forgot their wallet.
- The medical building represents good architecture while the hotel does not.
- The creek needs to be something creative, recreation/open space.
- City owned properties are expected to meet standards as well.
- Less than 4 stories seems appropriate, however green roofs or other benefits could be used to help justify added height.

## Breakout Room 3 Notes

### Part 1, Vision

Summary: Everyone liked the vision overall, with some comments/additions.

- Like the vision. Revitalization is needed, but concern that it won't happen because the city doesn't own the land so it's up to individual owners.
- Like the vision. Desire for affordable housing.
- Like the vision and that it addresses transportation. Worry about people using the area to park&ride, wondering how all the transportation improvements will fit.
- Need to ensure that there is affordable housing, and wants affordable housing defined.
- Need for parks and/or parklets
- Worry about the reputation of the area and the number of alcohol-selling establishments and potential cannabis establishments. Would like a way to limit the number.
- Desire to maintain the historic character, including continuing the treescape into the historic Arsenal area.
- Need for good design, especially along Military. Emphasis that as a Gateway area, it needs to be nice.
- Need to make/keep the area walkable and to calm traffic, especially on 5th.

### Part 2, Zoning District Approach

#### Allowed Uses

- Dislike for the zoning map. Concern that if commercial isn't required, it won't get built at all. Some discussion about concern that if commercial is required nothing will get built at all, or there will be empty storefronts. Questions about if there is a way to require commercial in some of the buildings but not others.
- Dislike for the way multifamily is allowed in the yellow areas. Overall agreement that it needs to be further defined, and that it should be limited to duplex/triplex/quads.

#### Building Height

- Desire to vary heights. Agreement that 4 stories everywhere is too much.
- Agreement on desire to maintain small town and historic feel.
- 4th story ok in certain circumstances, perhaps with stepbacks or other ways to vary/de-emphasize the height

#### Project Approvals

- Overall dislike of the recommendation. Desire to maintain more oversight.
- Like that the HPRC uses personal judgment.
- Worry about ugly buildings
- Standards need to include things like sun/shade
- Some understanding that there needs to be a middle ground so that housing does get built

### Parking

- Worry about changing parking requirements away from the existing
- Like the idea of using existing parking better
- Suggestion to use the alleys to make parking accessible in back
- Like the idea of half story of parking under building

### Other Comments

- Freeway noise affecting housing
- Schools and crowding due to increased housing
- Connection of 5th under the freeway needs to be improved

## Breakout Room 4 Notes

### Part 1, Vision

- All four active participants were supportive of the vision statement in full, though with lots of concern regarding details.

### Part 2, Zoning District Approach

#### Allowed Uses

- All four supported the allowed land use recommendations in full, with one person expressing an interest in strongly encouraging mixed-use development
- Two participants expressed concern regarding possible negative impacts from ground floor restaurants on new residential above.

#### Building Height:

- there was a shared concern regarding allowing four stories, ranging from a desire to not allow four stories at all, to an interest in limiting the number and location. Participants expressed concern about wind impacts and negatively impacting Benicia's small town charm. There was discussion about measuring from street level to allow for additional height where the buildable site is below street grade, which was relevant to one of the participant's commercial property.

#### Project Approvals:

- there was shared concern regarding streamlining approval processes to allow by-right developments that comply with objective standards, with three participants stating strong opposition. The concerns included perceived prospective negative aesthetic and density impacts that might be generated by by-right developments.

#### Parking:

- there was shared concern regarding parking impacts associated with intensified land use, though the only specific recommendation that generated concern was the recommendation to use excess right of way widths for parking—this centered on the perception that there might not be adequate excess right of way to work with. There was also discussion specific to the Sundowner regarding ground level parking below new development. One participant expressed concern regarding current impacts of on-street parking on L Street, advocating for new off street parking.

#### General comments:

- One participant spoke twice about her concerns regarding the possibility of competing business districts, and the benefit of integrating the Eastern Gateway area into the existing downtown, possibly by extending the study area boundary further to the west.
- Two participants spoke about their concerns regarding the two gas stations at the corner of E. 5th and Military East, and their limiting impact on mixed use district development.



- Two participants spoke about the importance of public and semi-public space, advocating for setbacks, outdoor dining and possibly parklets, and improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

## Breakout Room 5 Notes

### Part 1 - Vision

Strong support for the general vision and bullet points overall

- The area has a ton of potential, like Potrero Hill back in the day. A variety of building types is good
- Upgrading the image of the city gateway along 5<sup>th</sup> is really important
- Historic architectural identity is not so important for this area, more contemporary architectural forms should be welcomed provided scale is compatible; good architects rather than historical Disneyland needed
- New housing zoning needs to accommodate a full range of incomes, affordable yes, but also high-end
- Energy and water efficiency and reduced VMT need to be objectives as well, sustainability should be a major goal
- Mixed use needs other ordinances to facilitate livability, e.g. noise controls for commercial uses are very important
- Very important to keep and improve alleys

### Part 2 - Recommendations

#### Allowed Land Use

- Land use approach/distribution seems good in allowing residential throughout C zone area.
- Lower density for yellow areas seems fine
- Commercial uses allowed in area need to be tightened up to deal with existing problems and to support mixed use, i.e. enough liquor stores and gas stations

#### Building Height

- Looks good, all the example standards seem fine
- Concern 40' might be too low, need some flexibility to accommodate special conditions
- Three stories seem fine in general, consider four

#### Project Approvals

- By-right seems fine with clear strong standards
- City staff should work with applicants to help them with ideas to meet standards though, as City of Concord does
- Standards should not be so rigid as to discourage innovative ideas/designs; innovation should be invited

#### Parking

- The parking recommendations and strategies all seem fine (this group was not particularly concerned about parking)
- The need for new housing and neighborhood parking concerns needs to be balanced

## Breakout Room 6 Notes

### Part 1, Vision

- General support for new housing development, but also concern about gentrification in this part of Benicia
- General consensus that the eastern gateway area is not attractive right now and needs a lot of work to be a proper gateway.

### Part 2, Zoning District Approach

#### Allowed Uses

- Gas stations shouldn't be allowed in study area
- Support for ground floor residential throughout the study area, as well as for coffee shops/commercial uses in the study area
- Housing should never go next to gas stations
- Could we study the demand for commercial space in the study area? The city should ensure that commercial space would be filled if it were built

#### Building Height

- clarification needed on how the new standards would interact with the state density bonus and other state housing streamlining laws
- story poles needed to consider height during this study
- Liked idea of terraced rooftops on multifamily in this area so that they could have outdoor space and enjoy views of the strait

#### Parking

- general concern about the current parking situation and future development exacerbating parking issues in the area. It was agreed that adequate parking should be part of the vision.
- Past study done in the City: 75% of Benicians leave Benicia for work, to underline the importance of adequate parking
- Emeryville: able to accommodate ground floor commercial and housing by having 2nd and 3rd floor parking with 3+ stories of housing on top. Not well received by the rest of the group. The height in Emeryville would be much too high for Benicia and Military is so narrow that tall buildings will feel like they are towering over you in an unpleasant way.

Other Comments:

- Widespread praise for Waterstone Terrace Apartments in Benicia, which used to be a less aesthetically pleasing complex but with some exterior renovations it now fits well into the character of Benicia. It is two stories with parking that is tucked behind the structures. The complex includes trees, attractive fencing, and attractive vegetation.
- Create design standards specifically for renovating properties since so much of the study area is already developed.
- Support for alleys
- Support for greenspace in the study area
- Desire for street trees on both sides of the street
- Concern about the safety of sidewalks in the study area currently, but desire to have safe pedestrian facilities in this area, particularly that connect to arsenal and downtown.
- Create a space for food trucks and street food in the study area - that would be a really nice amenity and a way to support local vendors.

## Breakout Room 7 Notes

### Part 1, Vision

- Vision should more clearly state traffic calming, not just “all modes”
- In addition to modes of travel, there should be something about parking. Parking issues are a big deal in this area.
- There’s only ½ of a park in the whole area. There needs to be, especially if we increase density that we have to get outdoor spaces for people there.
- I have two young children, this area lacks parks for children. Playgrounds, open play areas. Especially if you are adding housing, to have a playground/park added.
- This area is a gateway to Benicia, lots of stuff that occurs on the East side of town. I would like for people to feel that this is an attractive community. Utilities should be underground, not hanging wires everywhere, it currently looks like a neglected section of town.
- Benicia is beautiful, but that’s not reflected in this area.
- I would like for developers to install native plants to keep it sustainable. No ivy, non-native species for landscaping.
- It’s hard to envision some of these nice ideas, sitting next to East 5<sup>th</sup> and Military West. Seems it will take more than wide sidewalks
- There are 3 gas stations within 3 blocks on this side of town. We need to look more at the variety of businesses instead of concentrating one kind of business there.
- The idea of mixed use is a good idea, the reality is it’s often difficult to build, conflicts between mixed uses, issues on First Street with bars open late and people above them. The concept is fine, the reality is that it’s difficult to implement. E.g., office above a bar and a lot of noise traveled above. Concern for complaints of residential above commercial.
- Where the sundowner is, would like to see, a place like a coffee shop or breakfast/lunch place. A place where the morning sun could come in, you could eat inside or outside, such as the southeast corner, and also be shielded by noise of the freeway.
- There’s a bar in the neighborhood and the taco truck. The Chinese restaurant closed down. It would be nice to have a coffee shop or restaurant
- Would like to see recreational trails.
- Everything is covered. My first interest was in parking.
- Military East crosswalk can be dicey, cars aren’t always aware of pedestrian row. Have walked with dog, stroller...cars don’t always pay attention. I don’t let my kids walk around there. Especially people turning left through the crosswalk.

### Part 2, Zoning District Approach

#### Allowed Uses

- It’s hard to do this, because there are still uses with a mixed use within a building. It’s not so much the individual parcels but is that really going to work? We heard from the first session, concerns with mixed use and how well that works.



- You could address that by limiting the commercial for example the hours of operation. The types of ground floor.

#### Building Height:

- this gets complicated because of the parking problem, can you actually provide enough parking for the buildings that are contemplated? This relates to the issue of building height. Can you build a 4 story building and have enough parking on-site. May work okay on the sundowner site, but others especially along Military East this may not work very well.
- The medical building looks a little out of place, there are no transitions. It's not unattractive but it looks out of place.
- If housing is 3-4 stories high, elevators should be included.

#### Project Approvals:

- Issue of by right development without public hearings...I understand the need for by right, when you are doing something in an existing community there could be conflicts because clearly, many people who live in the area may not be aware of the fact that development standards could change and people could be building new buildings without public review or input. How will that work in reality?
- I understand trying to expedite approvals, but it's difficult with infill development, going into...radically changing the building types from what is there now. Neighbors, people who live there, over time the neighborhood will change, people move in and move out, given the potential size of some buildings we need to find a middle ground where there is some type of public notice, public review of what would be built. I don't know how many projects haven't gone forward because of the approval process. I raise questions.
- I think we went from having too much review, to no review, there needs to be a happy medium in between. Would this mean, for example, there is no notice to the neighbors within so many feet?
- Neighbors should know what's happening in the community. Does a public notice mean that neighbors can stop a project? They should know what is happening at minimum.

#### Parking

- There is a major issue of parking in the neighborhood where the scout house used to be. It's been designated for housing. The neighbors are upset. The community center has a lot of parking, it often gets full. There is concern about on-street parking. They also feel, that people park on the street that should be parking in the shopping center at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Military (Sunshine Plaza). Not sure of concerns about the Jazzercise across the street. In that area there is a lot of discussion
- I'm skeptical, I don't like parking though I know we need it. Given the intensity proposed, land uses and heights, that you can actually provide enough parking. Parking is expensive to build, leaving sites undeveloped for parking is a high cost. There needs to be a lot more discussion about how much parking is required. When I think of parking in excess ROW, I would like to see them used for regional trails.

- Encouraging a culture of walk and bike would be beneficial, if it were pedestrian friendly. I would prefer it be pedestrian friendly rather than see a lot of parking. If it is more attractive to pedestrian, maybe they will want to park further away.
- Structured parking is okay if it can be afforded but it is costly.
- Concerns about on-street parking to the east of East 5<sup>th</sup> Street. There's a conflict with bicycles that will be difficult to resolve.
- When I worked at the CAC on military East, parking in the back...extremely difficult. Has always been an issue. Bottom of the 5<sup>th</sup> complaints that volunteers park in their lot. Complaints about parking at the trophy shop. When a lot of people are at the taco truck, it can be difficult to park. Concerns that lack of parking would be untenable.
- Underground parking is a good idea, could be an answer to a problem. There is not room for parking/will not be room for parking otherwise. Have you considered a small parking garage?



# Eastern Gateway Study - Vision and Zoning Approach

February 1, 2021, 1:10 PM

## Contents

i.	Summary of responses	2
ii.	Survey questions	5
iii.	Individual responses	6

**Eastern Gateway Study - Vision and Zoning Approach**

Feedback on Draft Vision and Zoning Approach Document

## Summary Of Responses

<b>As of February 1, 2021, 1:10 PM, this forum had:</b>		<b>Topic Start</b>
Attendees:	18	January 21, 2021, 1:12 PM
Responses:	7	
Minutes of Public Comment:	21	

---

## QUESTION 1

**What is your reaction to the vision statement (linked above)? Is it consistent with your vision for the future of the study area? Is there anything you would add, remove, or change?**

Answered	7
Skipped	0

---

## QUESTION 2

**Do you agree with this recommendation to increase multifamily housing development opportunity in the study area? Would you prefer a different approach?**

Answered	7
Skipped	0

---

## QUESTION 3

**Do you support the recommendation to allow residential-only projects in all locations in the study area? An alternative approach is to require mixed-use development in some locations, which would only allow housing above ground floor commercial uses.**

Answered	7
Skipped	0

---

## QUESTION 4

**What is your reaction to the idea of incentivizing housing production by allowing increased height for**

**Eastern Gateway Study - Vision and Zoning Approach**

## Feedback on Draft Vision and Zoning Approach Document

**multifamily and mixed-use development? Do you agree with this recommendation? Would you prefer a different approach?**

Answered	6
Skipped	1

---

## QUESTION 5

**Are there specific design standards listed in the recommendation that are particularly important to you? Should any of these standards not be required? Are there other standards that the City should consider?**

Answered	6
Skipped	1

---

## QUESTION 6

**What is your reaction to the recommended approach for required project approvals in the study area? Do you agree with this recommendation? Would you prefer a different approach?**

Answered	7
Skipped	0

---

## QUESTION 7

**What is your reaction to the recommended approach for parking? Do you agree with this recommendation? Would you prefer a different approach?**

Answered	7
Skipped	0

---

## QUESTION 8

**Are there specific parking strategies listed in the recommendation that you support and think should be a focus of further study? Are there strategies listed that should be removed from consideration? Are there other parking strategies that the City should consider?**

Answered	6
----------	---



## Eastern Gateway Study - Vision and Zoning Approach

Feedback on Draft Vision and Zoning Approach Document

Skipped 1

---

### QUESTION 9

**Is there any other feedback you would like to provide regarding the draft Vision and Zoning Approach document or the virtual workshop help on January 21, 2021?**

Answered 7

Skipped 0

---

## Eastern Gateway Study - Vision and Zoning Approach

### Feedback on Draft Vision and Zoning Approach Document

## Survey Questions

#### QUESTION 1

**What is your reaction to the vision statement (linked above)? Is it consistent with your vision for the future of the study area? Is there anything you would add, remove, or change?**

**Are there specific parking strategies listed in the recommendation that you support and think should be a focus of further study? Are there strategies listed that should be removed from consideration? Are there other parking strategies that the City should consider?**

#### QUESTION 2

**Do you agree with this recommendation to increase multifamily housing development opportunity in the study area? Would you prefer a different approach?**

#### QUESTION 9

**Is there any other feedback you would like to provide regarding the draft Vision and Zoning Approach document or the virtual workshop help on January 21, 2021?**

#### QUESTION 3

**Do you support the recommendation to allow residential-only projects in all locations in the study area? An alternative approach is to require mixed-use development in some locations, which would only allow housing above ground floor commercial uses.**

#### QUESTION 4

**What is your reaction to the idea of incentivizing housing production by allowing increased height for multifamily and mixed-use development? Do you agree with this recommendation? Would you prefer a different approach?**

#### QUESTION 5

**Are there specific design standards listed in the recommendation that are particularly important to you? Should any of these standards not be required? Are there other standards that the City should consider?**

#### QUESTION 6

**What is your reaction to the recommended approach for required project approvals in the study area? Do you agree with this recommendation? Would you prefer a different approach?**

#### QUESTION 7

**What is your reaction to the recommended approach for parking? Do you agree with this recommendation? Would you prefer a different approach?**

#### QUESTION 8

## Eastern Gateway Study - Vision and Zoning Approach

### Feedback on Draft Vision and Zoning Approach Document

## Individual Responses

### All participants with ages 60-69

#### Hamid Akbari

inside City Boundary

January 22, 2021, 3:31 PM

#### Question 1

The redevelopment plan is an excellent opportunity and we should all look forward to it. The crucial aspect of the plan, however, is being able to fund the project so it can be expedited for the benefits to be realized within the next few years. I am recommending to use city allocated bonds as a low interest rate mortgage to accommodate the project.

#### Question 2

100%

#### Question 3

Yes

#### Question 4

Completely agree with recommendation

#### Question 5

Modern up to date design is my preference

#### Question 6

I would agree with recommended approach.

#### Question 7

Will agree to reduced on site parking with in certain blocks.

#### Question 8

City should consider block by block parking strategies.

#### Question 9

The redevelopment plan is an excellent opportunity and we should all look forward to it. The crucial aspect of the plan, however, is being able to fund the project so it can be expedited for the benefits to be realized within the next few years. I am recommending to use allocated city bonds as a low interest rate mortgage to accommodate the project.

#### Name not shown

inside City Boundary

January 26, 2021, 11:37 PM

#### Question 1

The vision statement refers to the study area as the Eastern Gateway. What makes it a gateway, the fact that it's the eastern-most interchange on I-780? The vision should explain what the term Eastern Gateway means, and why it is a defining characteristic and an appropriate term for describing the study area. The vision statement should consider an outcome for public and private improvements in the study area that will reinforce the Eastern Gateway identity.

The vision statement refers to outcomes that emphasize housing production in the study area. These outcomes need to be compared to existing conditions. Please report on the existing conditions for housing types, housing affordability, owner/renter housing mix, as well as population and demographics.

The vision statement refers to outcomes that will enhance Benicia's unique community identity. Can the study define this unique community identity? I would define Benicia's identity as an historic small town on the scenic Carquinez Strait.

The study needs a vision for neighborhood parks and open space. I never knew there was a creek at East N Street. The north side of East N Street, east of the creek, is undeveloped. Can these adjoining parcels be incorporated into a park? The vision statement should support developing this open space for multiple purposes, like habitat restoration, storm water retention, recreation, and a gathering space for the neighborhood.

There are parcels in the study area that could be developed to provide views from upper floors. I lived on East O Street in the Villa Panorama apartments and had a great view of the Strait, through the utility wires. Some new buildings could have gathering spaces on the roof to take advantage of the views. The vision statement should support these views and include strategies to create and preserve them.

A vision statement should be expanded to support adequate public works and parks in the study area to serve the new housing. The general perception is that there are some significant deficiencies in the public works and parks serving the study area. Can the study look into the infrastructure and park needs of the study area assuming construction of the new housing?

#### Question 2

I generally agree with the recommendation to add multifamily as an allowed use in both the primary and secondary study area. However, the study should acknowledge that adding multifamily use to these parcels

## Eastern Gateway Study - Vision and Zoning Approach

### Feedback on Draft Vision and Zoning Approach Document

can be a significant redevelopment incentive because it will increase the value of these parcels. Redevelopment to a multifamily use should be tied to improvements to streets, sidewalks, alleys, storm drains, undergrounding utilities and maintaining view corridors. Redevelopment of Parcels 35a and 35b to a multifamily use might be used as an incentive for participation in rehousing the existing residents. Redevelopment to a multifamily use should also be considered as an incentive for assembling adjacent parcels, for example, redevelopment of Parcel 25 to a multifamily use could be conditioned on combining with Parcels 24 or 26.

#### Question 3

I do not support the recommendation to allow residential-only projects in all locations in the study area. Mixed-use should be required for the parcels adjacent to the East Fifth/Military East intersection. This is a busy and highly visible corner so commercial use on the ground floor would be better than a residential use. The study area is the commercial district for the neighborhood so ground floor neighborhood-serving commercial uses should be encouraged on parcels with frontage on East Fifth Street or Military East.

To minimize conflicts between residential and commercial uses, commercial uses should not be allowed on parcels without this frontage, so Parcel 29 should allow redevelopment to a residential-only use.

Both East Fifth Street and Military East have blocks that are primarily residential in character, and this study should not encourage the spread of non-residential uses beyond the study area boundary. Since information on population and demographics of the study area and surrounding neighborhood have not been made available, it is difficult to judge whether the neighborhood will provide sufficient customers for ground-floor commercial uses on all the parcels fronting East Fifth Street and Military East. If research shows there won't be a sufficient market for neighborhood commercial uses, then consider allowing residential-only uses for the parcels on Military East, west of East Fourth Street, and for the parcels on East Fifth Street, south of East L Street. Encouraging housing on these parcels will help sustain the residential character of the blocks on East Fifth Street and Military East that are adjacent to the study area.

So far, the study has defined a mixed-use development as a residential building with commercial uses on the ground floor. Consider allowing restaurants on the roof or top floor of a mixed-use building to take advantage of views to the Carquinez Strait.

The study should also consider allowing live-work uses in a residential-only or mixed-use development. The study should determine if there is demand for live-work uses that could be served in the study area.

#### Question 4

Building height is a significant factor in defining the historic small-town character of Benicia. The study area is a neighborhood. Building heights

in neighborhoods should be no higher than the building heights in the downtown area. In fact, a case can be made that neighborhood building-height limits should be lower than the downtown building height limits. I do not support increasing the allowed building height in the study area as it would make this neighborhood feel too urban for Benicia.

No case has been made that additional incentives are needed for housing production in the area, beyond permitting multifamily housing on parcels where it is currently is prohibited.

Another approach to incentivize housing production would be to invest in public works and parks in the study area so it attracts private investment. State law provides cities with options for generating revenue to fund infrastructure, such as Infrastructure Financing Districts. Conditions may exist in the neighborhood that justifies the use of these financing tools. The study should investigate whether these options could help pay for the public works and park improvements in the study area that would help attract private investments in housing.

#### Question 5

Street trees are particularly important. A canopy of large shade trees helps cool paved surfaces, and makes streets more walkable. Some data shows that businesses on tree-lined streets generate more revenue than businesses located on streets without trees. Large trees have other environmental benefits such as reducing storm water runoff, providing wildlife habitat, and capturing air pollution and carbon dioxide. Street trees also need to be carefully selected and placed to protect views from the upper floors of new buildings.

Landscaping is particularly important. The most attractive and welcoming areas of communities where I have lived have had abundant and well-maintained landscaping. Landscaping can be an important buffer for noise and building mass, which will be significant issues in the study area if mixed-use and multifamily developments are to be accommodated. The standards should include a minimum amount of open space and setbacks on the parcel to be developed so there is room for adequate landscaping.

Standards for open space should include outside seating for projects that serve food or beverages. Outdoor spaces should be visible from a public right-of-way, accessible and include amenities.

Standards are needed to define the physical conditions for parking and circulation. These standards should provide for adequate pedestrian circulation between parking and building entrances. Primary building entrances for commercial uses should be on East Fifth Street or Military East. Mid-block pedestrian pathways through or between developments should be encouraged. On-site parking should be accessed by alleys. Standards are needed to guide improvements to alleys. Standards are needed for convenient and safe bicycle parking.

Standards for lighting are important to ensure safety while avoiding glare

## Eastern Gateway Study - Vision and Zoning Approach

### Feedback on Draft Vision and Zoning Approach Document

and excessive lighting. The local newspaper recently described complaints from residents on First Street who lived above a restaurant with excessive lighting.

Building standards are needed to reduce the bulk of a building, such as maximum floor areas for upper floors in a development that are less than the ground floor area. Windows should occupy a minimum amount of surface area of a building's façade. Ground floor residences that are close to sidewalks should have raised foundations so pedestrians can't look into private spaces.

A standard is needed for the minimum amount of affordable housing in residential projects to support the affordable housing outcome described in the vision statement.

A standard is needed to protect view corridors from upper floors in the study area.

A standard is needed for public art in the study area.

There are probably other standards that need to be discussed given the by-right approval process described in the zoning district approach. The process to adopt standards will be the only opportunity to address community concerns for by-right development projects.

#### Question 6

I would support by-right approvals as long as the objective standards were adequate and complete. This study is the public's only chance to comment on these standards so an effort is needed to provide notice to anyone potentially affected by a project that will have by-right approval, and all aspects of future development in the study area should be discussed. Since the standards are to replace review by the Historical Preservation Review Commission, the standards will require input from experts in the architectural history of the area.

If the projects on Parcels 12 (Holiday Inn), 28 (Bottom of the Fifth) and 49 (Medical Office Building) were reviewed by the Historical Preservation Review Commission, then their review needed better design standards. Bottom of the Fifth has unauthentic architecture with fake windows and a clock tower without a clock. The Holiday Inn has cheap-looking windows with fake mullions (they probably should be double-hung wood windows rather than aluminum sliders), the architecture looks like a poor imitation of a Benicia building from the 19th century, and the landscape setback doesn't work very well with the trees that were planted. The architecture of the Medical Office Building does not relate well to other nearby buildings, the entry is not inviting, the few windows on the front façade are plain, and the trees on the East Fifth Street frontage were not placed to shade the street. These projects have design problems that should not be allowed in projects that have by-right approval.

California State Density Bonus Law requires a city to grant a density bonus and waivers for affordable housing projects, if requested.

Applicants seeking approval under this law are permitted to deviate from strict adherence to a city's standards. This law also requires a city to grant concessions to its standards based on the amount of affordable housing in the project, if requested. The study needs to review this law and describe how it might impact the objective design standards developed for the study area. The study should also describe how the environmental review process would affect the impacts of future development in the area.

The study needs to provide more information on the by-right approval process before I can agree with the staff recommendation. The time required to get approvals for new development should be shortened, but the by-right approval process with objective design standards seems to have the potential for significant loopholes.

#### Question 7

I support the recommended approach. The comments at the workshop describing parking problems in the study area surprised me. I drive, walk and bicycle through the area often and have only experienced a parking problem at Big-O, where I needed to use an on-street parking space because their parking lot was full. The commenters need to describe the nature of the parking problem they experience, and their expectations for parking. The study's recommended approach for parking is not complete, however.

#### Question 8

Since parking is expensive, can consume a lot of property, and does not generate tax revenue, the study should investigate parking in the study area to see if the facts match the perceptions of the commenters who are complaining about parking. If there is a parking shortage, and none of the recommended strategies can fix the shortage, then the City should consider a residential parking permit program that includes regulations that encourage short-term parking on East Fifth Street and Military East, and discourage long-term parking for the businesses.

The study proposed to utilize excess right-of-way for parking. The study should also consider utilizing excess right-of-way for uses other than parking (e.g. wider sidewalks, outdoor seating, landscaping, drainage improvements, etc.).

In addition to emphasizing limits on new driveway entrances and curb cuts to preserve parking, the City should require that on-site parking be accessed from the alleys to replace or reduce the number of existing driveway entrances/curb cuts.

Consider strategies that would reduce the need for car ownership by residents. Have multifamily housing projects offer transit passes to the occupants for the buses that go to the Pleasant Hill BART Station and the Martinez AMTRAK station. Provide a quality transit stop on East Fifth Street that includes real-time bus arrival information. Encourage establishment of a car-share business in the neighborhood.



## Eastern Gateway Study - Vision and Zoning Approach

### Feedback on Draft Vision and Zoning Approach Document

The vision statement encourages senior housing, so ensure new development is accessible to scooters and consider legalizing the use of golf carts on city streets, to help residents age-in-place.

The Holiday Inn and the Medical Office Building are good examples of effective on-site parking in the study area. The Harvey building on Military East would have supported a more walkable neighborhood if the off-street parking was located behind the building with access to the alley, eliminating one or both of the driveway entrances that cross the sidewalk on Military East.

#### Question 9

The workshop was good, but you should think about another way to report out from the break-out sessions. The speakers told you what they heard, but they did not tell you everything that was said by the participants, which limits the value of the breakout session to the workshop.

So far this study has not discussed the housing needs of study area residents. The study area includes old apartment buildings that provide affordable housing to many. My church delivers food to needy residents in these building. These residents should remain in the neighborhood and the buildings rehabilitated to improve living conditions and building design. The residents of the trailer park on Parcels 35a and 35b should be rehoused. Addressing housing needs that exist in the study area will help address housing needs elsewhere in the city where there are old apartment buildings and dilapidated trailer parks.

The study needs to generate some important information as requested in the above comments before completion of Task 2, which describes the options to address key issues and select a preferred approach. The schedule of the study proposes to complete this task in February 2021.

Benicia has had some prominent failures with commercial/mixed-use buildings over the past several decades. The multi-tenant commercial development at the southeast corner of First Street and East F Street includes a large internal courtyard primarily occupied by non-retail use, which creates a dead space for the downtown. The more recent mixed-use development at the northeast corner of First Street and East B Street has improved design, but suffers from tension between the residents and the businesses. Are there any lessons learned from these projects that can be applied to the study area?

## All participants who haven't shared their age

---

**Larnie Fox**

inside City Boundary

January 27, 2021, 1:00 PM

#### Question 1

Given that artists and the arts are an indispensable part of Benicia's history, culture and image, it would be appropriate to add a line or two about the necessity of more live/work spaces for artists, and more artistic vibrancy including public sculpture and a percent for art program.

#### Question 2

Yes, with the addition of co-op and shared spaces, and please mention artist's live/work spaces to encourage development of those.

#### Question 3

Yes

#### Question 4

I think four or five stories would be great, with appropriate adjacent residential transitions.

#### Question 5

Yes, facade articulation, setbacks and street trees.

#### Question 6

I understand the desire for by-right approvals, but caution is needed to give the community a say in what is built, and to deny those who follow the letter but not the spirit of the standards.

#### Question 7

I disagree with "Establish limits on new driveway entrances and curb cuts to preserve existing street parking". Everyone should be aware that more and more cars will need to be plugged in to charge their batteries, and that is generally best accomplished in driveways.

#### Question 8

Planners should demonstrate their awareness of the increasing use of electric cars.

#### Question 9

Please do a more thorough outreach to people who live in the area.

Thanks for including our voices in the process. Please let our voices guide the ongoing decision making process. Too often public input is noted then later disregarded.

**Eastern Gateway Study - Vision and Zoning Approach**

## Feedback on Draft Vision and Zoning Approach Document

Thanks for all your hard work and vision!

**Name not available**

inside City Boundary

January 27, 2021, 3:34 PM

**Question 1**

Are all of the funds available being used for the Eastern Gateway?. I really do not believe that there are any plans for other areas of affordable housing in Benicia. Building height of 40 feet is too high. The medical office building used as an example is atrocious, and DOES NOT FIT IN BENICIA! I am also concerned with who will maintain the affordable rental units. Also, that approvals are being "streamlined". Who is going to control and ensure that developers do not produce shoddy, ugly buildings that do not fit in this beautiful area?

**Question 2**

I would like to know, UPFRONT, where else in Benicia affordable multi-family housing will be accommodated.

**Question 3**

I like a mixed use development, if it's the right type of mixed use. Restaurants, art galleries, retail locations. No more 7-11 or liquor stores or gas stations!

**Question 4**

NO 40 foot buildings! Look around, the 40 foot building we have is ugly and does not fit anywhere in Benicia. I fear this is where we are headed, cramming things into a small area with no consideration for what and who is already here.

**Question 5**

Character in building is important. This area has mid-century, victorian, bungalow, craftsman, etc. We do not need any ugly box buildings. Outside park areas are important, and parking is extremely important. There is already too much street parking, which is unappealing and unsafe.

**Question 6**

Do not allow by-right! This gives away too much to developers that are just checking off boxes. Would you want that next door to you? I do not think so. Neither do I.

**Question 7**

We DO NOT NEED more street parking. Look around, there is already too

much, and it is spilling into neighborhoods. The street in front of my home is NEVER cleaned by the street sweeper because of street parking. I do not want to see a multi story parking structure either.

**Question 8**

No response

**Question 9**

I don't like where this is going, especially the "streamlined" approval process and allowing buildings of 40 feet. This is not right for the "Eastern Gateway" or any location in Benicia.

**Teresa Greenwell**

inside City Boundary

January 29, 2021, 2:18 PM

**Question 1**

Do not make all parcels "by right". Limit "by right" to specific parcels so that the City maintains some flexibility. Housing should be built with sufficient on site parking so that street parking doesn't have to absorb parking demand. New 3-4 story buildings should not block the "views" of existing, surrounding residential. New, tall buildings on East 5th & East Military should not make a driver feel like they are driving in a tunnel. Limit housing density so that the addition of State mandated Developer Housing Density Bonuses is absorbed without creating overpopulation & parking shortages.

**Question 2**

Of the 800+ dwelling units the State/ABAG has mandated for Benicia to provide, how many 100's of new residents are expected from this proposed new housing? Over how many years does the City expect this new development to take? The height of buildings and the number of dwelling units should be based on and limited to fairly distribute the 800+ units throughout the City and not place the brunt on this Eastern Gateway area.

**Question 3**

Lot 29 should be reZoned to a Parking Lot to remediate parking shortages caused by the combination of E. Military businesses and by Community Center usage.

**Question 4**

No response

## Eastern Gateway Study - Vision and Zoning Approach

### Feedback on Draft Vision and Zoning Approach Document

#### Question 5

No response

#### Question 6

Not all parcels should be by-right because nearby residents should be allowed to give input on new development that could impact their parking, views, neighborhood density and other areas of concern.

#### Question 7

It is critical to "minimize adverse parking impacts on neighborhood residents". In the area of E. Military, E 4th St, & East L St, the combination of the businesses in the area and the Community Center demands for parking have severely impacted neighborhood residents on E. 4th St and East L St. There is a parking shortage that can be remediated by increasing the supply of public parking. Converting Lot 29 to a parking lot would help resolve the parking shortage.

#### Question 8

The COMMUNITY CENTER MASTER PLAN states a 40(?) stall parking lot will need to be constructed adjacent to the Center's existing parking lot on East L Street to accommodate future growth of the Community Center. The Master Plan places the new parking lot on the site of the former "T-Ball field". Losing a grass field that's available for youth activities is a highly undesirable outcome. Converting Lot 29 to parking would forestall this loss.

Parking Strategy: A Parking Permit Program was implemented on East 4th & East L Streets. It has failed from lack of police enforcement. If the police would periodically ticket offenders, existing parking available to neighborhood residents would increase.

#### Question 9

One of the Developer Housing Density Bonus benefits is to increase the number of allowed dwelling units while reducing parking required per dwelling unit. This is the opposite of the Study's Zoning Vision to "minimize adverse parking impacts on neighborhood residents" and is the exact reason why Ben Noble stated "the Study's Zoning Area Vision could be difficult to achieve with existing parking requirements". But we need Existing Zoning Parking Requirements because the State mandated Developer Density Bonus increases the number of dwelling units and concurrently reduces required parking stalls. The Zoning Code for Existing Required Parking Spaces should not be reduced, since State law already mandates a reduction relative to Developer Housing Density bonus benefits.

---

**Bob Berman**  
inside City Boundary

January 29, 2021, 4:54 PM

#### Question 1

Need to include mention of regional recreational trails (Ridge Trail, Bay Trail, etc.). Need to discuss public parks.

#### Question 2

Is there really a demand for this much Multifamily, Mixed Use and Commercial zoning? I question that.

#### Question 3

I am okay with some residential-only projects and some mixed use.

#### Question 4

Buildings of 40 feet seem out of character with the rest of Benicia. Also what are the impacts (traffic, parking, need for parks, etc.) of 40 story buildings.

#### Question 5

In addition to street trees need to address roads, bikeways, and pedestrian issues. Also parks.

#### Question 6

Do not support by-right process. Property owners and residents should be notified of proposed development and have a process that allows public review and input to the specific development proposal.

#### Question 7

Parking is clearly an issue. Seems that the scale of development will create a demand for parking that will be difficult to meet. Use of tandem parking spaces, and parking lifts are not going to work in this area. Structured parking may be too expensive to justify in this area. Do not support using excess right-of-way widths to increase supply of parking.

#### Question 8

Probably have to reduce the amount of development allowed.

#### Question 9

For such a plan to be successful I believe there will be the need for substantial public investment. There will need to be public investment to solve existing roads, bikeways, and pedestrian issues. Need to underground existing overhead utilities (telephone, electric, cable tv, etc.). Need to provide public parks and greenways for families residing in the area.

---

**Eastern Gateway Study - Vision and Zoning Approach**

## Feedback on Draft Vision and Zoning Approach Document

**Name not available**

January 29, 2021, 8:08 PM

**Question 1**

I liked the vision statement but I do not believe that multi-family house should be located along either East 5th Street or Military East.

**Question 2**

I do not agree with this recommendation because I do not believe that you have chosen the best area for multifamily housing development. The chosen area is not appealing right now. It's a freeway exit and has the amenities appropriate to that use - gas station, convenience store, parking lots. I can't believe that adding multi-story developments along Military or 5th Street would enhance the character of the neighborhood, which is already somewhat blighted. I would recommend having Area A be mixed use and commercial and extending it down to East 3rd Street in order to avoid having two commercial areas in Benicia that do not connect with one another. I would make Area B Single-Family, Multi-family allowed and extend it from Parcel 45-42, then from Parcel 11 to East 3rd, along N Street. I would also designate the properties west of Parcel 4 extending the East 3rd as Single-Family, Multi-family allowed. Many of these residential units are in very poor condition and could be converted into multi-story housing units with associated parking. The properties on N st that have been developed East of 6th Street are similar to what I would encourage. I believe that this would create a diverse community of housing options similar to the Grand Avenue area near Lake Merritt in Oakland and would avoid the chaos of combining traffic, multi-family and commercial properties on Military and 5th Street

**Question 3**

I do not support the recommendation to allow residential-only projects in all locations in the study area. Who wants to live near a gas station? If the mixed use and commercial area was extended down Military East to East 3rd Street, I would allow the existing residences to stay if desired. However these properties would make great commercial sites, with alley access and parking in the rear of the building. It would make it more likely that Military East, if renovated with wide sidewalks and greenery, would be a desirable destination from either downtown or East 5th Street.

**Question 4**

I am very opposed to incentivizing housing production by allowing increased height (over 40 feet for multi-family or mixed-use development. Benicia does not have buildings over 40 feet presently and putting them along the freeway exit would be intrusive and out of character with the town. The Benicia Capitol is only 34 feet and should be respected as a reasonable model for all buildings in Benicia.

**Question 5**

I believe that the existing parking standards should not be changed for this area. We have had some developments in Benicia (e.g. the commercial property at the corner of East 2nd and Military) in which the parking is cramped and poorly designed. I would not want this mistake to be repeated, particularly since the reality is that the bus rarely goes through Benicia and biking and walking is presently almost impossible in the chosen area.

**Question 6**

I do not agree with the by-right standards. It would be very difficult to develop specific guidelines that would consistently result in quality projects. Benicia has developed multi-family units in the past, but it took community input and developer changes before they were approved. Developers inherently have different incentives and desires that communities. I believe that we should use some type of incentive to encourage multi-family units, but we should not allow by-right projects.

**Question 7**

I do not agree with the recommended approach for parking. This is already a congested area without adequate parking. I would clarify how much housing is desired in this area and assure that each multi-family unit has adequate parking. I would also strategize regarding how to distribute the multi-family and/or affordable units throughout Benicia instead of focused in this area. There are many open spaces in Benicia that could be used for multi-family housing, such as at the bottom of Hastings Drive or lower Cambridge. Each development should be in a different elementary school and should have a maximum of 40feet heights with adequate parking.

**Question 8**

We live in a suburb and presently the transportation options are limited. I would strongly encourage the project to include major improvements to Military East so that people can walk from East 5th to 1st street. Presently the sidewalks are in very poor condition and have utility poles sticking up so that it is not possible to push a baby stroller or use a wheelchair on either side of the street. I would make the sidewalks wider, put the utilities underground and buffer walkers from traffic with greenery. I would also improve N Street so that people can walk along that street. Finally, I would invest in a bike path along N Street from East 3rd to the Arsenal. This would require a bridge over the East N Street Creek, but would create a viable and aesthetically pleasing transportation option for bikers from the Transit Hub in the Industrial park to East 5th Street and downtown Benicia. The Park Road renovation that is planned and funded would no longer just lead to the Arsenal, but would create a bike pathway for the entire East side of Benicia. These improvements would also reduce the "VMT", vehicle miles traveled, which is a goal of a designated PDA or Priority Development Area

**Question 9**

## **Eastern Gateway Study - Vision and Zoning Approach**

### Feedback on Draft Vision and Zoning Approach Document

Thank you for organizing the workshop. It was very well done and really allowed us to consider this project in detail.

## Danielle Crider

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, January 22, 2021 4:19 PM  
**To:** Danielle Crider  
**Subject:** Eastern Gateway

Hi Danielle,

I attended the workshop last night and wanted to let you know that our group did not have time to discuss all the issues. I'd like to add my thoughts to your list.

1. The future of private automobiles are quickly embracing electric cars. These cars need a driveway to be charged so eliminating a driveway is not a good idea.
2. I would like to see units supporting artists as well as live/work units. Our artist community is getting older and are looking to grow older with like-minded individuals.
3. Will the new zoning allow for co-op housing?
4. I'd love to have local people invest in our town. I don't know if it is possible (or legal?) to require all development to be local. Local can be interpreted broadly to be Solano County or the Bay Area but not other countries.

Thank you very much,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

City of Benicia  
Community Development  
January 25, 2021  
**RECEIVED**



## Danielle Crider

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 21, 2021 8:23 PM  
**To:** Danielle Crider  
**Subject:** Eastern Gateway Study

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Ben Noble and Danielle Crider

Thank you again for your presentation and insights.

I was asked to forward the questions for Ben to reply.

On the record questions;

If we're looking to enhance the area through the development plan – how do you ensure we don't end up with empty buildings or storefronts?

Will there be a study of the current Demographic of the population lifestyle habit?

Including the spending trends of the current and projected demographics of the population based on the planned development.

Ben shared he'd respond, thank you!

-

[REDACTED]  
"One kind word can change someone's day"





Comments on the Eastern Gateway Project – Benicia

I liked the vision statement, but I do not believe that multi-family house should be located along either East 5th Street or Military East.

I do not agree with this recommendation because I do not believe that you have chosen the best area for multifamily housing development. The chosen area is not appealing right now. It's a freeway exit and has the amenities appropriate to that use - gas station, convenience store, parking lots. I can't believe that adding multi-story developments along Military or 5th Street would enhance the character of the neighborhood, which is already somewhat blighted. I would recommend having Area A be mixed use and commercial and extending it down to East 3rd Street in order to avoid having two commercial areas in Benicia that do not connect with one another. I would make Area B Single-Family, Multi-family allowed and extend it from Parcel 45-42, then from Parcel 11 to East 3rd, along N Street. I would also designate the properties west of Parcel 4 extending the East 3rd as Single-Family, Multi-family allowed. Many of these residential units are in very poor condition and could be converted into multi-story housing units with associated parking. The properties on N st that have been developed East of 6th Street are similar to what I would encourage. I believe that this would create a diverse community of housing options similar to the Grand Avenue area near Lake Merritt in Oakland and would avoid the chaos of combining traffic, multi-family and commercial properties on Military and 5th Street

I do not support the recommendation to allow residential-only projects in all locations in the study area. Who wants to live near a gas station? If the mixed use and commercial area was extended down Military East to East 3rd Street, I would allow the existing residences to stay if desired. However, these properties would make great commercial sites, with alley access and parking in the rear of the building. It would make it more likely that Military East, if renovated with wide sidewalks and greenery, would be a desirable destination from either downtown or East 5th Street.

I am very opposed to incentivizing housing production by allowing increased height (over 40 feet for multi-family or mixed-use development. Benicia does not have buildings over 40 feet presently and putting them along the freeway exit would be intrusive and out of character with the town. The Benicia Capitol is only 34 feet and should be respected as a reasonable model for all buildings in Benicia.

I believe that the existing parking standards should not be changed for this area. We have had some developments in Benicia (e.g. the commercial property at the corner of East 2nd and Military in which the parking is cramped and poorly designed. I would not want this mistake to be repeated, particularly since the reality is that the bus rarely goes through Benicia and biking and walking is presently almost impossible in the chosen area.

I do not agree with the by-right standards. It would be very difficult to develop specific guidelines that would consistently result in quality projects. Benicia has developed multi-family units in the past, but it took community input and developer changes before they were approved. Developers inherently have different incentives and desires than communities. I believe that we should use some type of incentive to encourage multi-family units, but we should not allow by-right projects.

I do not agree with the recommended approach for parking. This is already a congested area without adequate parking. I would clarify how much housing is desired in this area and assure that each multi-family unit has adequate parking. I would also strategize regarding how to distribute the multi-family and/or affordable units throughout Benicia instead of focused in this area. There are many open spaces in Benicia that could be used for multi-family housing, such as at the bottom of Hastings Drive or lower Cambridge. Each development should be in a different elementary school and should have a maximum of 40-foot heights with adequate parking.

We live in a suburb and presently the transportation options are limited. I would strongly encourage the project to include major improvements to Military East so that people can walk from East 5th to 1st street. Presently the sidewalks are in very poor condition and have utility poles sticking up so that it is not possible to push a baby stroller or use a wheelchair on either side of the street. I would make the sidewalks wider, put the utilities underground and buffer walkers from traffic with greenery. I would also improve N Street so that people can walk along that street. Finally, I would invest in a bike path along N Street from East 3rd to the Arsenal. This would require a signal to cross East 5<sup>th</sup> Street and a bridge over the East N Street Creek, but would create a viable and aesthetically pleasing transportation option for bikers from the Transit Hub in the Industrial park to East 5th Street and downtown Benicia. The Park Road renovation that is funded and to be built would no longer be a bike path that just leads to the Arsenal. This would create a bike pathway for the entire East side of Benicia. These improvements would also reduce the "VMT", vehicle miles traveled, which is a goal of a designated PDA, or priority development area.

## Pedrotti Ace Hardware - Eastern Gateway Study

[REDACTED]

Wed 1/27/2021 7:25 PM

To: Danielle Crider <DCrider@ci.benicia.ca.us>

Danielle,



Sorry I wasn't able to attend the web meeting last week but I understand that you had quite a turnout! After reviewing all the current material, I have two questions, possible for Ben? Not sure, so I will let you distribute. Please let me know who will address these comments.

1) Affordable housing. Inasmuch as HUD funded the study with the goal of increasing housing, including affordable housing, will the Gateway Project result in new or modified requirements for affordable housing? This is a bit confusing as we have discussed affordable housing, subsidized housing, set aside for affordable housing, etc. Will new housing be market rate or will these have other set aside requirements? (Forgive me if I am not using proper terms...)

2) Parking. It may be beneficial in the Gateway study to make comparisons with that of the Southampton Shopping Center as well as the Columbus Parkway; each have large footprints are well known in the community. Both also have serious parking issues. It would be helpful to know what the actual parking usage is for each as well as the underlying requirement and then share this in the Gateway Study as readers would be familiar with both commercial centers.

Background: The Southampton Center where Ace Hardware is located, was constructed without a final review of actual parking that they developer did not get to the minimum city requirement. As such and with the loss of some parking for recycling, ATMs building, fire lane improvements, etc, the result is that they Center is approximately 100 spaces below minimum City standard. Parking has been very problematic with no solution in site as the property owner, Raleys, Ace, and tenants cannot agree on acceptable plans. You wouldn't know that during the pandemic as things have quieted down, but it will return.

The Columbus Parkway project is likewise congested. Sometimes miserably so.

City staff should share what they understand as to what the actual parking situation is the Southampton and Columbus Parkway Centers as compared to the minimum city standard. This should be included and discussed in the Gateway project that we do make the same mistakes.

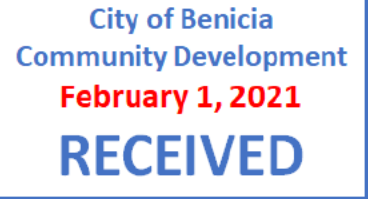
Yours truly,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED]

**Danielle Crider**

---



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 31, 2021 11:10 AM  
**To:** Danielle Crider  
**Subject:** RE: Pedrotti Ace Hardware - Eastern Gateway Study

Danielle,

I understand there is a growing interest on the use of offsite manufacturing for new housing, similar to what OS Housing in Mare Island builds. As new production techniques make this more efficient and reduce cost, there can be a significant reduction in waste and environmental footprint while at the same time allowing for great diversity in architectural design. In fact, governments across the globe are starting to encourage, if not require, offsite manufacturing in new housing projects.

As the timeframe for the Eastern Gateway is decades, should we consider this now?

Also given the timeframe for EG, how long will the first set of standards last and what mechanisms will be put in place for the review and or updating of these requirements in the future?

Thanks!

[REDACTED]