Background
The City of Albany is working with Toole Design Group, Opticos Design, and Local Government Commission to develop the Solano Avenue Complete Streets and Corridor Revitalization Plan. The Plan’s focus is Upper Solano Avenue (from Masonic Avenue to Ventura Avenue) and will include streetscape and mobility improvements that encompass innovative urban design, changes to infrastructure, and economic development. The Plan’s recommendations will focus on pedestrian safety and access, the public realm, connections to transit, motor vehicles, curbside management, and spot improvements for bicyclists. The recommendations will create a vibrant and accessible main street for Albany that is safe, comfortable, and enjoyable.

The planning process began in February 2018, and the final Plan is anticipated to go to the City Council in February 2019.

Existing Conditions Report
In May, the project team developed an Existing Conditions Report which provides an overview of existing land uses, streetscape conditions, vehicle circulation, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, transit service, and parking and loading within the corridor. This assessment establishes a basis upon which to develop the Plan’s recommendations. See Table 1 for key takeaways from the report.
Table 1. Key Takeaways from the Existing Conditions Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Goals</th>
<th>Existing Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 Improve safety for all users     | - Wide street that encourages speeding  
                                 | - Atypical intersection geometry  
                                 | - Long/exposed pedestrian crossings and poor visibility of crosswalks  
                                 | - Non-compliant curb ramps and sidewalk impediments (such as poles, utility boxes, etc) that limit accessibility  
                                 | - Missing pedestrian push-buttons and crosswalks in some locations  
                                 | - Sightline and visibility limitations when parking and backing out                                                                                   |
| 2 Enhance access to transit        | - Inconsistent bus stop conditions  
                                 | - Lack of coordination with bus stops and crosswalk locations  
                                 | - “Ghost” stops that reduce transit reliability                                                                                                          |
| 3 Promote a cohesive streetscape   | - Lack of landmarks and block-by-block legibility  
                                 | - Narrow and damaged sidewalks  
                                 | - Aging streetscape infrastructure  
                                 | - Landscaping and trees are inconsistent and create challenges for some pedestrians (i.e., impeding or buckling the sidewalk)  
                                 | - Lack of pedestrian-scale lighting  
                                 | - Lack of aesthetic elements like appropriate plantings, lighting, murals, and art                                                                      |
| 4 Support local economic activity  | - Many unique, locally owned businesses and restaurants  
                                 | - Opportunities for placemaking and public gathering places                                                                                           |

Community Engagement
The City is committed to inclusive and participatory outreach to engage all residents and visitors in this process.

The City has established a Community Advisory Group (CAG) which is comprised of key community stakeholders, such as the Solano Avenue Merchants Association, Solano Rollers & Strollers, AC Transit staff, nearby residents, people with limited mobility, and others. City staff and the project team met with the CAG in April 2018, to gather their initial ideas for the corridor through a discussion and walk audit of the corridor. The CAG will meet twice more during the process.
City staff and the project team also conducted a walk audit with Public Works staff from the City of Berkeley to discuss the vision for Solano Avenue and identify potential issues. City staff anticipate ongoing conversations with City of Berkeley staff throughout the process.

Design Lab and Workshop Summary
On May 30-June 1, 2018, the City held a Design Lab which included a community walk audit, public workshop, and multiple focus group meetings (see Figures 1 and 2). During the Design Lab, the project team synthesized the community comments and developed initial designs for Solano Avenue.

Community Input

Pedestrian Improvements
- Improve the sidewalks – widen (e.g., between Pomona Avenue and Ramona Avenue – south side) and remove tripping hazards (e.g., between Ventura Avenue and Ordway Avenue – south side). Remove obstacles such as newspaper boxes and street trees as appropriate.
- Improve the crosswalks – clearly mark crosswalks; install them where missing at intersections (e.g., western leg at Ramona Ave; eastern legs at Carmel Ave, San Carlos Ave, Tacoma Ave, and Ventura Ave), and enhance them with additional treatments as needed.
- Improve the curb ramps – most curb ramps do not meet current ADA standards and are not aligned with people’s path of travel
- Create more curb bulb-outs
- Install pedestrian-scale street lighting
- Reduce the number of curb cuts/driveways – creates an uncomfortable walking environment

Public Space Improvements
There was a lot of interest in public realm improvements, as shown in the pop-up survey question asked at the workshop (see Figure 3). Ideas included:
- Install more public/gathering spaces, including outdoor dining
- Plant more trees and indigenous landscaping
- Create more parklets and buslets
- Create public art, such as murals and sculptures

Additional Improvements
- Slow traffic and narrow the roadway
- Provide space for kids and families to bike safely; install more bike racks
- Expand the number of free parking spaces
Initial Design Ideas
After the community workshop, the project team developed initial ideas for the corridor based on the community’s input, walk audits of the corridor, and a data-driven analysis (see Figure 4 and Table 2).

Figure 3. Pop-up survey responses to how participants would spend $1 million improving Solano Avenue.

Figure 4. Draft Sketch of Corridor Improvements
### Table 2. Initial Design Ideas for Solano Avenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Goals</th>
<th>Design Ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1** Improve safety for all users     | • Narrow the travel lane widths to create more space for the pedestrian realm and other activities  

• Widen, and repair cracked, sidewalks  

• Install curb extensions at key locations to square up and correct intersection geometry  

• Install planted medians and crossing islands to narrow roadways and create shorter crossings in key locations  

• Upgrade intersections based on collision history, transit mobility needs, stormwater management, and placemaking opportunities  

• Remove obstacles to people with mobility or visual impairments, such as improving curb ramps and removing utility boxes and poles in the pedestrian right-of-way  

• Slow traffic through traffic calming, such as medians and bulb-outs  

• Facilitate bicycle connections along routes perpendicular to the corridor |
| **2** Enhance access to transit        | • Place transit and placemaking nodes in key locations  

• Improve alignment of bus stops and crosswalk  

• Improve transit service by removing “ghost” stops |
| **3** Promote a cohesive streetscape   | • Contrast surfacing between roadway and parking areas to visually narrow the corridor  

• Install lighting and landscaping throughout the corridor  

• Implement curbside management strategies that address loading, TNCs and delivery vehicles  

• Incorporating public art elements |
| **4** Support local economic activity  | • Build upon the existing business ecosystem through retail revitalization strategies  

• Create public places for gathering and outdoor dining |

### Next Steps

Over the summer, the project team will continue to refine the concept designs. The next community event is tentatively scheduled for mid-September and, at that time, the City will solicit feedback on the initial design concepts. The project team will return to the Traffic & Safety Commission twice more during the process; the dates are tentatively scheduled for September to review the initial design and December to review the draft plan.