



Office of the Mayor

CONSENT CALENDAR

June 1, 2021

To: Members of the City Council

From: Mayor Jesse Arreguín, Councilmember Kate Harrison, Councilmember Susan Wengraf, and Councilmember Sophie Hahn

Subject: Budget Referral: Phase 2 of Civic Center District Visioning

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget process \$200,000 in General Fund revenues for Phase 2 of planning for the Civic Center Visioning Project.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

\$200,000 in General Fund revenues. Funding sources could include excess property transfer tax revenues which per Council Budget policy go into the Capital Improvement Fund and must be prioritized for one-time expenses.

BACKGROUND

After a robust community process, on September 22, 2020, the Berkeley City Council adopted Resolution No. 69,579-N.S. approving Berkeley's Civic Center Visioning and Implementation Plan and striking reference to any preferred design concept. Approval of the Civic Center Visioning Plan was the first step in a multi-year process to develop a design concept and implementation plan for rehabilitating Old City Hall, the Veterans Memorial Building and Civic Center Park to meet seismic retrofit standards and reflect community priorities for open space, performance space, recreation, historic preservation, arts and culture and economic development. During Council discussion, there was a commitment to engage the community in evaluating design alternatives and developing a preferred design concept for future planning.

Funding is now needed for additional public process, planning and design to develop a preferred design concept and a funding plan. This item requests \$200,000 for additional planning and design with the goal of developing a design concept for the Civic Center District, based on input from the community, city commissions and City Council.

CONTACT PERSON

Jesse Arreguín, Mayor, 510-981-7100

## Attachments:

1. Resolution No. 69,579-N.S. "APPROVING BERKELEY'S CIVIC CENTER VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN"

RESOLUTION NO. 69,579-N.S.

APPROVING BERKELEY'S CIVIC CENTER VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

WHEREAS, the Berkeley voters passed *Measure T1 Bond Funding for Infrastructure and Facilities*, to repair, renovate, replace, or reconstruct the City's aging infrastructure and facilities, including important City facilities and buildings; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Memorial Building and Old City Hall were slated for structural analysis and visioning of possible conceptual design alternatives, in concert with Civic Center Park, to help determine a direction for future capital improvements to restore and secure these facilities to maximize their community benefit; and

WHEREAS, on January 22, 2019 City Council approved this solicitation at its regular meeting and approved the engagement of a qualified project consultant team to assist in the completion of this project at its regular July 16, 2019 meeting; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley's project team has conducted an inclusive and transparent community process, engaged meaningfully with stakeholders, and provided a compelling and shared vision for the Civic Center area that supports current and future community needs while respecting and celebrating the area's rich past and historically significant structures; and

WHEREAS, *Berkeley's Civic Center Vision and Implementation Plan* determines a direction for future capital improvements to restore and secure these facilities to maximize their community benefit.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City Council approves and adopts *Berkeley's Civic Center Vision and Implementation Plan* (Exhibit A) and declares its intent to support the vision articulated in the plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City Manager is hereby authorized to further the implementation of the plan and its ambitious vision for the future of Berkeley's Civic Center:

"Civic Center will be the heart of Berkeley's community. Civic Center will be the prime space for civic life, culture, and the arts. It will reflect the city's diverse identities, celebrating its history, and contributing to shaping its future. A place of shared resources and a platform for free expression accessible to all, Civic Center aims to manifest the city's values, advance social justice, and demonstrate the power of true public space."

The foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Berkeley City Council on September 22, 2020 by the following vote:

Ayes: Bartlett, Droste, Hahn, Harrison, Kesarwani, Robinson, and Arreguin.

Noes: None.

Absent: Davila and Wengraf.



Jesse Arreguin, Mayor

Attest:

  
Mark Numainville, City Clerk



July 10, 2020

# Berkeley's Civic Center

## Vision and Implementation Plan

# A Vision for Berkeley's Civic Center

Civic Center will be the heart of Berkeley's community. Civic Center will be the prime space for civic life, culture, and the arts. It will reflect the city's diverse identities, celebrating its history, and contributing to shaping its future. A place of shared resources and a platform for free expression accessible to all, Civic Center aims to manifest the city's values, advance social justice, and demonstrate the power of true public space.

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# Reimagining the heart of Berkeley

## Developing a bold yet pragmatic vision for the future of Berkeley's Civic Center.

When it comes to community building and civic engagement, there are few places that compare to Berkeley. Arguably, few cities have championed so passionately and unconditionally the fundamental values that make a city a city — namely the sharing of collective resources and a true respect for individual expression. A laboratory of new political ideas since its founding, Berkeley has always advanced our understanding of the word Community. Yet, unlike other cities that play a similar role on the world stage, Berkeley lacks an updated civic space that truly embodies the values its community lives by.

Certainly, Berkeley doesn't lack great public spaces. Tilden Park provides wonderful recreation in nature. The Berkeley Marina grants breathtaking views of the Bay and connects us with its waterfront. Indian Rock and the Rose Garden offer special places for respite and contemplation.

Even if mostly for “gown not town”, The UC Berkeley campus itself is in fact a grand, world-class, public place, and People's Park speaks of our understanding of public space as a space of solidarity. Yet, we couldn't point to any of these places as the center of Berkeley's Public Life. We are left with the question: Where is Berkeley's Heart? Where's the public space of prime community identity that all Berkeleyans use, the place that gathers us as one, weaving together our daily lives? Thinking of it, many central squares in other cities we might travel to are exactly that— the thriving heart of their community. Why shouldn't Berkeley have something similar? Why can't Civic Center, which was designed 100 years ago with that idea in mind, serve this very purpose for the next 100 years?

We know that, in its current condition, the site comes with challenges that prevent it from realizing its full potential. (1) The site is slightly off-center from the most active

part of downtown, enough to be just off the beaten path. (2) Some of its buildings are not only in need of capital intensive restoration, but they also give their back to the central open space, with ground floors that are not active or permeable. (3) As a consequence to these two first points, with the exception of the Farmers' Market and a few other periodic events, Berkeley residents have organized their daily public life around other spaces and destinations and, as of today, Civic Center doesn't make the list of the places people like to go. In day to day life, the park remains underutilized therefore prone to accommodate socially undesirable behaviors. Yet the opportunities outplay the challenges. The site features some of the most historically significant buildings in the city, all of which revolve around a central open space that has been patiently waiting to be further activated by the community for years, like a canvas awaits the final strokes of paint to become a distinguished work of art.

With this project, Berkeley's community has been presented with a once-in-a-generation opportunity. Members of the public from all walks of life came together to reimagine the identity and function of Civic Center and reaffirm it as the beating heart of its tight-knit community. Berkelyans have shown a true desire to transform this place and the commitment to work together to make it happen. All stakeholders donated their time generously to help us understand what the unmet needs and undiscovered possibilities of the place are. Members of the community turned up in very high numbers in each and every public event organized throughout the arc of the project and demonstrated they know how to work collaboratively for a common purpose.

The result is a bold yet pragmatic vision for the future of the place, one that gives Berkeley the Heart of the City it deserves, matching the unique identity and the larger-than-life spirit of its people.



# Existing Conditions

## 1.1 Introduction, Site & Context

## 1.2 Site Assessment

1.2.1 Historic Structures

1.2.2 Policy Context

1.2.3 Public Space Public Life study results

## 1.1

# Project Background

## The Berkeley Civic Center Vision Project

The purpose of this project has been to develop a shared community vision, design concepts and implementation plan for Berkeley's Civic Center area, with a transparent public process rooted in analysis of how people use Civic Center today, community needs, site analysis, and historic structures analysis. The planning area includes Martin Luther King Civic Center Park, the Veterans Memorial Building, and City Hall — the Maudelle Shirek Building.

The Berkeley Civic Center Historic District (the same geographic area as the Civic Center Overlay Zone) was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998 and includes multiple local Landmarks *(please refer to the Historic Structure*



*Report in the appendix for additional information).* The Veterans Building and the Maudelle Shirek Building are in need of seismic upgrading, American Disabilities Act compliance, and show signs of deferred maintenance. The Park, although successful as a gathering space during events and rallies, does not attract an everyday intensity of use that matches its central location and symbolic status.

In 2016, Berkeley voters passed Measure T1, which authorized the City to sell \$100 million of general obligation bonds to repair, renovate, replace, or reconstruct the City's aging infrastructure, including important City facilities and buildings. The Civic Center Vision and Implementation Plan is funded as a T1 Phase 1 project.

The T1 funding is for the structural analysis and visioning of possible conceptual design alternatives for the Veterans Memorial Building, the Maudelle Shirek Building and Civic Center Park, along with streets and adjacent structures necessary for context-sensitive solutions. The Vision Plan aim to help the City and the community clarify what their Civic Center can become, and to determine capital improvement priorities for this area.



The T1 bond program is administered by Parks, Recreation & Waterfront and Public Works departments. The Office of Economic Development (situated within the City Manager’s Office) is managing the project across multiple City Departments

and with the consultant team led by Gehl.

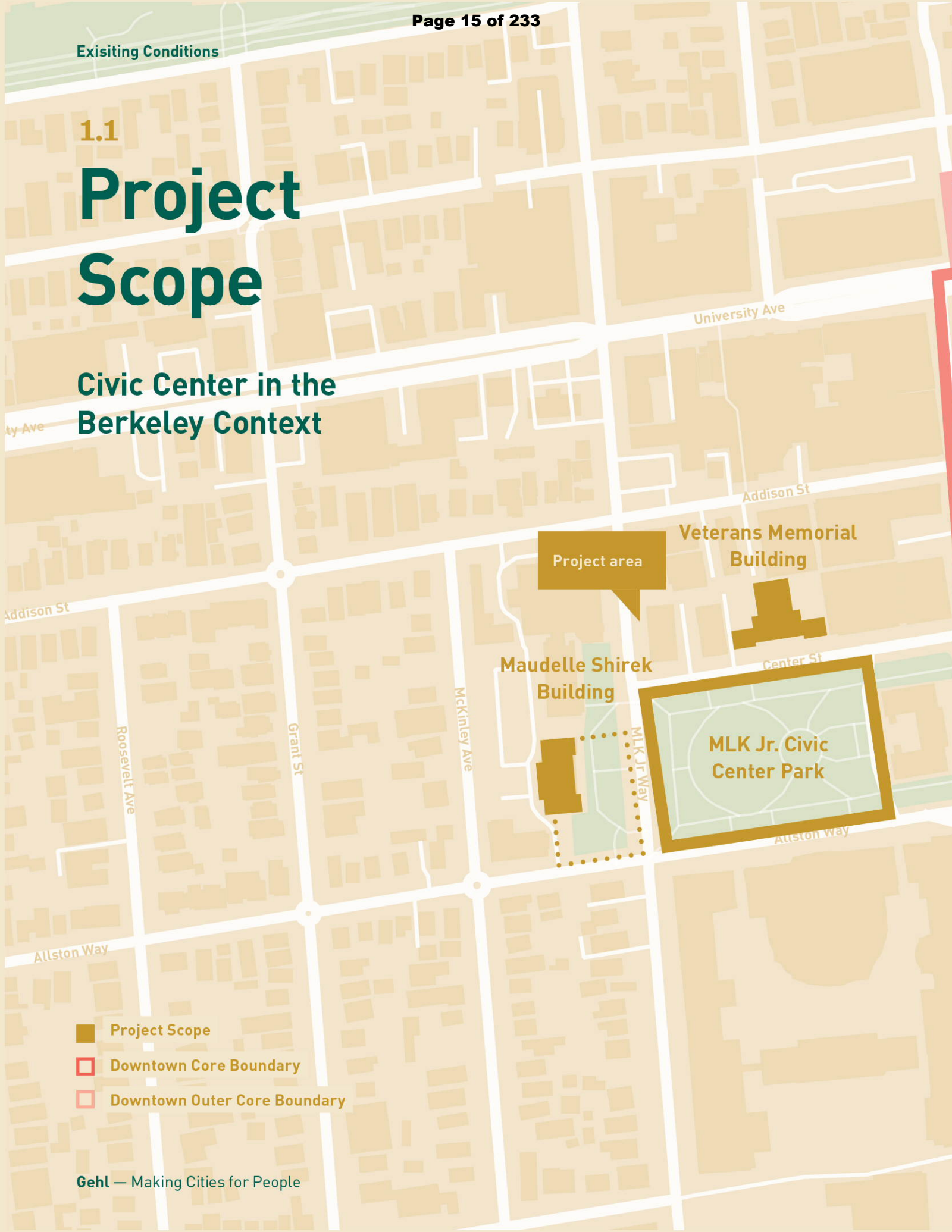
The Vision Project addresses planning, development, historic preservation, transportation, and arts programming issues, and has seen involvement from Landmarks, Parks, Public Works and Civic Arts Commissions. Other important bodies — such as Berkeley Unified School District, and local stakeholders — such as the Ecology Center, YMCA, the Berkeley Historical Society, existing tenants, including the Veterans organizations themselves and local Arts organizations, have been engaged with *(see chapter 2)* and have informed the shaping of the Vision and Implementation Plan.

Existing Conditions

1.1

# Project Scope

## Civic Center in the Berkeley Context



- Project Scope
- Downtown Core Boundary
- Downtown Outer Core Boundary

Berkeley Downtown  
Outer Core

Berkeley  
Downtown Core



**BART**

Shattuck Ave

Addison St

Center St

Allston Way

Oxford St

Frank Schlessinger Way

University of  
California  
Berkeley

Berkeley Downtown  
Outer Core

Bancroft Way

Bancroft Way



1.1

# Project Timeline

Where are we in the process?



2019 ..... 2020

SEP — OCT — NOV — DEC — JAN — FEB — MAR —

Tour

PSPL

Historic Structures Research

Concept Design

TAC

TAC

Community Meeting

Community Meeting

SSC

SSC

City Council

Tour

Focus group interviews

Draft Report

Historic Structure Reports

■ Research / Design

■ Engagement

■ Deliverables

TAC= Technical Advisory Committee

SSC= Super Subcommittee of the Commissions (Including: T1 Public Works, Parks Recreation & Waterfront, Landmarks, and Civic Arts)

PSPL= Public Space and Public Life studies

## Design Concepts

MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP

TAC Community Meeting

SSC

City Council

Website

Final Draft

Final Report

## 1.2

# Site Assessment

Although surrounded by varied architecture, just a block away from the bustling BART Plaza and with great views up Center Street into campus, Civic Center is a challenging public space.

## Issues summary

- 2180 Milvia — the only building in the park — turns its back to the park (opens up to a parking lot)
- Blank façades surround the park
- Central lawn is often too wet to sit on, few public benches
- Certain groups, although small in number, negatively impact the sense of security
- Lack of good night lighting
- Lack of sense of safety
- Lack of maintenance and lots of litter
- No food or beverage offer
- Play provision is inadequate
- Restrooms are inadequate
- Shaded and dark spaces around the main seating areas (near fountain)
- The green is too large and empty
- The main buildings don't have a ground floor that opens onto the street or the park

- The park's pedestrian paths compete with the sidewalks
- There is extensive on-street parking
- Traffic dominated environment of surrounding streets

## Opportunities summary

- 3,000 students at Berkeley High School daily
- Center Street connects the BART to the Park — opportunity to create a terminus
- Further green and landscape
- High quality buildings
- Large residential community to the west
- Location adjacent to Arts District
- On the edge of but also part of downtown
- Opportunity to remove parking and traffic on Center and Allston Streets
- Provide food and beverage in the park
- Re-orient facades toward the park, potentially subdividing interior spaces for various tenants to have a front-door onto the park and providing multiple entry points to buildings
- Walking distance to public transit

Berkeley Civic Center

Protection

Got to have these ...



Feeling safe - protection against traffic & accidents



Feeling secure - protection against crime & violence



Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences

Comfort

... without these no one will stay



Opportunities to walk/cycle



Opportunities to stop & stay



Opportunities to sit



Opportunities to see



Opportunities to talk & listen



Opportunities for play & exercise

Delight

These make the difference between good & great places



Dimensioned at a human-scale



Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate



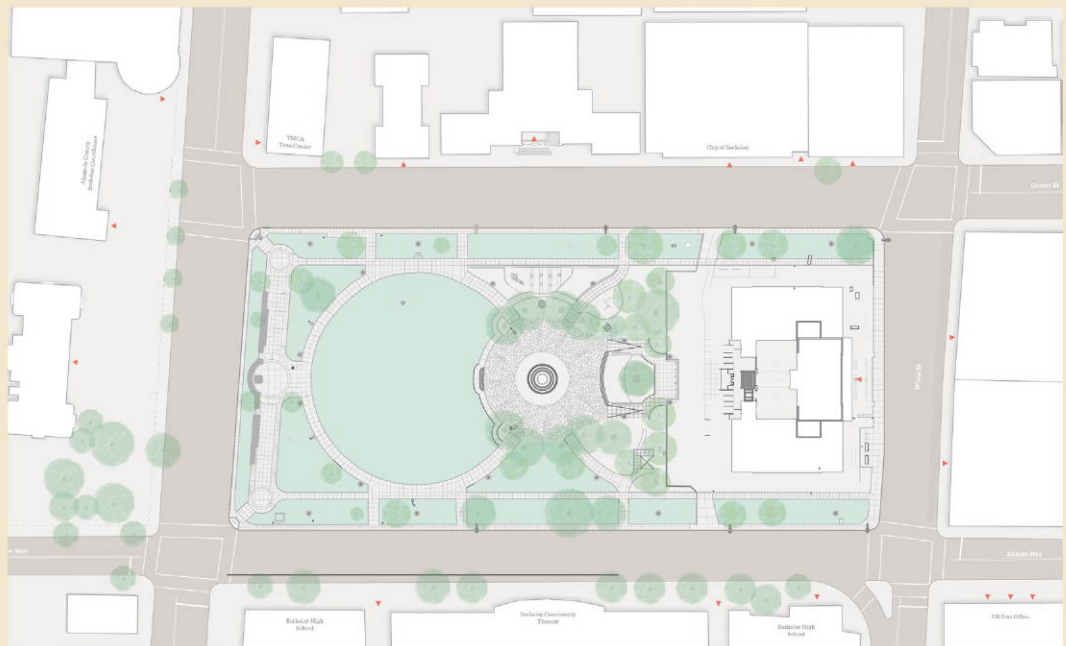
Aesthetic qualities and positive sensory experience

12 Quality Criteria

Berkeley's Civic Center was assessed using the Twelve Quality Criteria, a Gehl tool for researching how public spaces are experienced by their users. The tool was used to evaluate whether different features of the public space are protective, comfortable and enjoyable for people spending time there.

← 12 Quality Criteria Civic Center Assessment

Civic Center, Existing Conditions →



## 1.2.1

An overview\*

# Historic Structures

## Rehabilitation of Historic Structures

*\*For a more detailed look at the historical context, please refer to the Historic Structure Reports in the appendix.*

An implementable vision plan for the Berkeley Civic Center should be firmly rooted in an understanding of not only its current configuration and uses, but also its past context, associated important persons and pivotal events which have influenced the design and development of Berkeley's premier civic space. To that end, the project team has completed a historic structure report for both City Hall (Maudelle Shirek Building) and the Veterans Memorial Building. Additionally, a Historic Landscape Analysis has been completed for Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park.

The two Historic Structures Reports include a historical narrative, building and site descriptions, chronology of development and use, identification of character-defining features, integrity analysis, conditions assessment, and treatment recommendations. The Historic

Landscape Analysis includes identification of character-defining features, chronology of development and change, conditions assessment, and treatment recommendations. These documents are intended to help guide and inform future projects at both buildings and future improvements to the park.

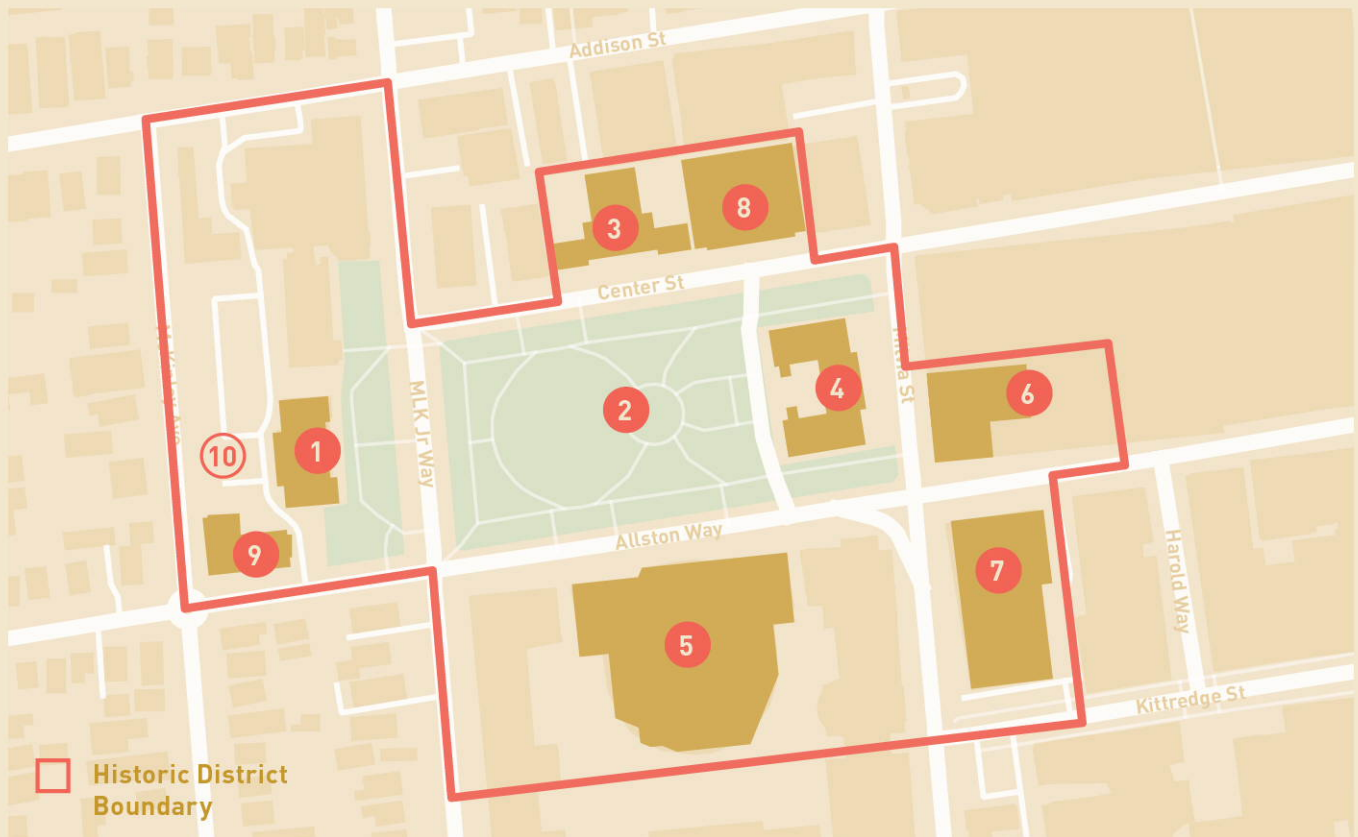
The Berkeley Civic Center Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998 and is also a City of Berkeley designated Landmark District. The Civic Center Park and nine nearby buildings, including City Hall and the Veterans Building, are contributing resources to the historic district. These resources, when considered collectively, create a distinct sense of place; each resource valued for a different historical association and contribution to the district and to Berkeley as a whole.

Additionally, City Hall is recognized as individual City Landmark #7 (1975) and the Veterans Memorial Building is individual City Landmark #89 (1985). Civic Center Park is included in the Historic District (Landmark #208, 1998), but is not individually designated.

It is important to remember that any proposed changes to these resources are subject to compliance with The Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and are under the purview of the Berkeley Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC). In addition, should any Federal funding be secured, any project that makes use of those monies, would be subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

- 1 Maudelle Shirek Building
- 2 Martin Luther King Jr Civic Center Park
- 3 The Veterans Memorial Building
- 4 The Federal Land Bank Building/ Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Building
- 5 Berkeley Community Theater
- 6 Young Men's Christian Association Building
- 7 United States Post Office
- 8 State Farm Insurance Companies Building
- 9 City Hall Annex
- 10 Hall of Justice (*demolished*)

↓ Civic Center Historic Resources



## Existing Conditions

## Maudelle Shirek Building, (aka) Old City Hall

**The Maudelle Shirek Building**, also known as Old City Hall, is a local and national landmark constructed in 1906, has an architectural grandeur and prime location at Civic Center Park that commands a use that is commensurate with the building's significance. The building contains several character-defining features, including the main entry hall and central spiral staircase, that must be retained. The north and south wings on the main and upper floors, however, have been heavily renovated over time and offer large open spaces that may be rehabilitated to accommodate any number of uses. The parking lot to the building's south offers an ideal location for an addition.

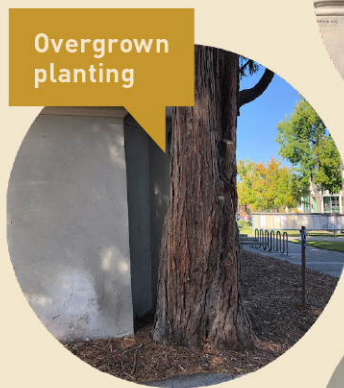
The building's original main formal entry is raised 11 feet above grade, posing a challenge, but not an insurmountable one, for universal access. A number of additional building material surveys, including ones for water intrusion and roof slab condition, must be completed to understand the full extent of repair required for the reuse of this building.



Inappropriate building material



Deferred maintenance



Overgrown planting



Damage

## Veterans Memorial Building

**The Veterans Memorial Building** retains a remarkable amount of original interior building materials and decorative finishes that require careful conservation. The primary character-defining space, and heart of the building, is the auditorium, offering a highly sought-after mid-size performance space. The large rooms in the wings of the main and upper floors offer additional space for gathering, performance or practice. The first and second floors should remain in their historical configuration, while the basement could be divided into smaller spaces. The courtyards to the north and south of the auditorium and the roof present potential locations for additions or public outdoor space. The largest and most expensive challenge to rehabilitating this building is a seismic retrofit, a result of the building's unique combination of construction types, concrete and wood. Significant water damage at the north and south stairways must also be immediately addressed to ensure the building's future reuse.



The building **INTERIOR** shows signs of excessive water damage



The building **EXTERIOR** has consistent cracking and staining





## Seismic Upgrade

Both Old City Hall and the Veterans Memorial Building were constructed prior to any comprehensive seismic building standards and must be seismically retrofitted. Two options have been considered for each building;

A **Basic Performance Objective for Existing Buildings (BPOE)** scheme is built to code and allows safe egress from the building and prevents the building from collapse during a seismic event, however, the building may incur damages that are exceedingly expensive to repair.

An **Immediate Occupancy (IO)** scheme allows safe egress and provides enhanced protection to the building such that it could be reoccupied almost immediately following a seismic event.

A BPOE retrofit scheme is very common for existing buildings and can accommodate any number of building uses. An IO scheme is typically undertaken for buildings that house “essential services,” such as hospitals and emergency services, that must remain open in the case of community crisis.

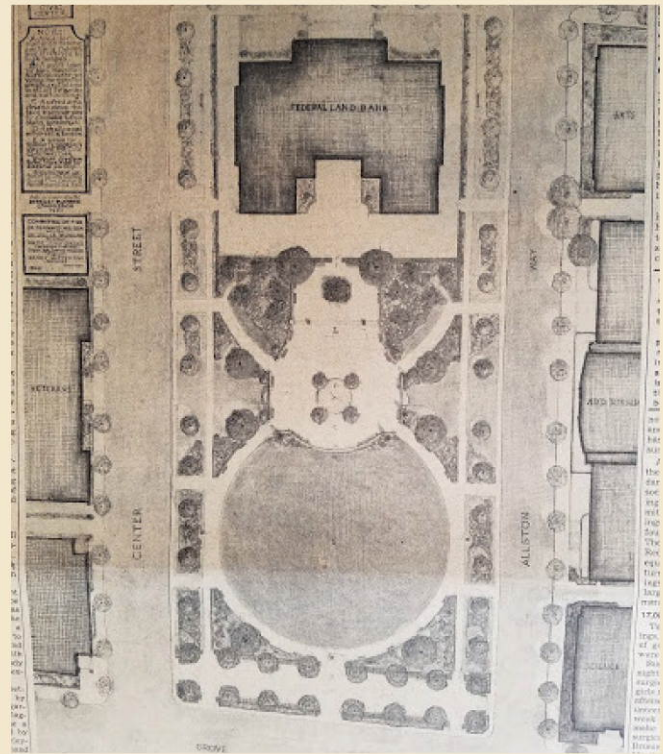




## Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park

As a contributing resource to the Berkeley Civic Center National Register District, the Martin Luther King Junior Civic Center Park is afforded a high level of protection by the State Office of Historic Preservation. Any proposed revisions to the Park are subject to review and approval through local and state approval processes. The Historic Landscape Assessment (*See Appendix*) was written in accordance with The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes. The treatment recommendations are consistent with these standards. Each states a preferred approach per preservation best practices, acknowledging that while some proposed alterations may be more strident than recommended, they are worthy of consideration given the City's goals for the Park and its future.

The City of Berkeley has challenged the design team to imagine schemes that push the limits of the existing Civic Center District, schemes that are



justified by a collective desire for change. Through an extensive outreach effort, the design team has accumulated input from many residents, user groups, organizations, City department and agency representatives, and elected and appointed officials within the City of Berkeley. The collected evidence speaks to both the lost potential of the Park and the desire to see it brought back to life through physical and programmatic interventions.

Most agree that the Civic Center Park has functioned significantly below its potential for quite some time. Several design elements of the Park, including the indirect circulation paths, the oversized central lawn, and the shady fountain terrace, act as deterrents to would-be Park users. A lack of

cleanliness and maintenance to the Park, its plantings and physical urban fabric, the non-functional fountain, and the removal of places for seating also contribute an uninviting Park experience. Given the public underutilization of the Park by most residents except during planned events or high school lunch times, the most visible users are unhoused individuals who have come to regard the Park as their home, which has regrettably changed the community's perception of the Park.

It is unclear how aware Berkeley residents are of this Park's status as a historic landmark and perhaps an awareness of the role the Park has played in the City's history would shift public opinion and help grow a deeper appreciation for it as a place. Civic Center Park, and indeed the entirety of the Civic Center Historic District, is awaiting its next act. A careful balance between



↑ Civic Center Park viewed from 2180 Milvia Street in 2019

preservation principles and powerful new design ideas is required to create a welcoming, usable and lively Park that meets the project goals and anchors the historical Park in the lives and hearts of Berkeley for generations to come.

We encourage and welcome a healthy conversation about respect for history and the vitality of new ideas. This is a crucial next step. Let's dive in!

*For a more detailed look at the historical context, please refer to Appendix.*



↑ Civic Center Park viewed from 2180 Milvia Street in the 1940s

## 1.2.2

# Policy Context

The Civic Center Area Vision Plan considers the general Civic Center Area and focuses specifically on the Veterans Memorial Building, Maudelle Shirek Building, and Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. Civic Center Park. Guiding planning documents include:

- Berkeley’s General Plan (2002)
- The Downtown Area Plan & EIR (2012)
- The Street & Open Space Improvement Plan (2012)
- The Downtown Design Guidelines,
- Berkeley’s Pedestrian Master Plan (2010)
- Berkeley’s Bicycle Plan (2017)
- Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC updated through 2020).

## Overarching Themes

A review of policies in the guiding policy documents reveals common high-level aspirations distilled here as overarching themes.

### Community Participation

Berkeley’s General Plan’s underscores the importance of community participation in

decisions relating to land use, community character, and open space.

### Government, Education & Culture

The General Plan and the Downtown Area Plan (DAP) recognize the Civic Center as a valuable opportunity to bring together complementary government, education and cultural uses.

#### (Figure 1.1) Allowable Uses & Development Standards →

The Civic Center Zoning Overlay District (2014) reserves the area for community-oriented activities and uses and encompasses the Veterans Memorial Building, Maudelle Shirek Building, and MLK Jr. Civic Center Park. Construction on the Veterans Memorial and Maudelle Shirek sites would also need to conform with underlying development standards for the “C-DMU Corridor” and “Residential R-2” districts respectively.

Historic Preservation & Context-Sensitive Design

The DAP calls for conservation of district subareas with strong historic identity, while encouraging context-sensitive design to allow for changes to the built environment over time.

Pedestrian Priority

When considering Civic Center Area improvements, vehicular traffic should be calmed and pedestrian-friendly environments should take priority.

An Inclusive Vibrant Place

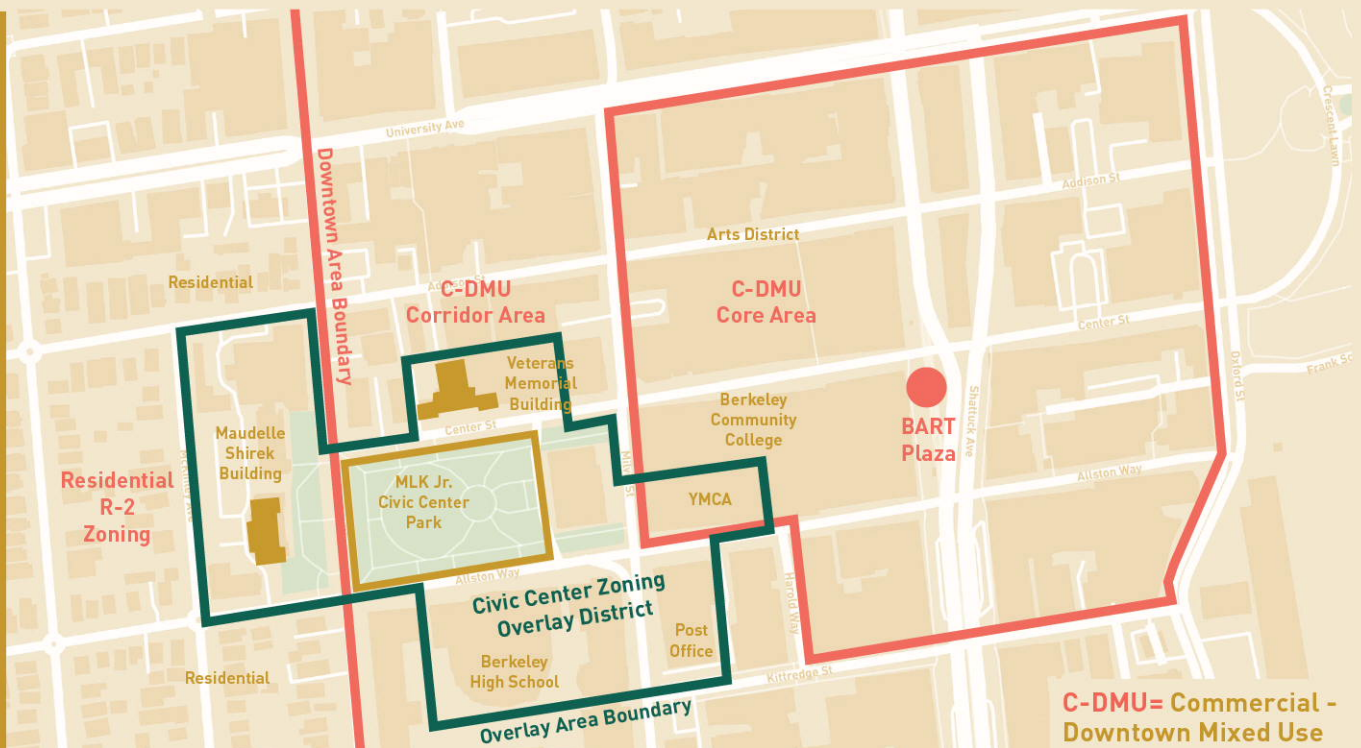
Multiple planning documents cite the Downtown and Civic Center Area as the “heart of Berkeley” to be enjoyed by everyone in the community, regardless of age or ability.

**Civic, Cultural, Educational & Community Uses**

Adopted policies and regulations emphasize community-oriented uses in the Civic Center Area. Berkeley’s 2002 General Plan Policy Land Use Number 22 (LU-22) stipulates:

*Maintain the Civic Center as a cohesively designed, well-maintained, and secure place for community activities, cultural & educational uses, and essential civic functions & facilities.*

The DAP Policy Land Use Number 1.4 underscores that the importance of civic uses to the area. For example government, education and recreation uses and community and social service functions are made more accessible to



## Existing Conditions

all given superior transit access and the central location within the city.

The Veterans Memorial Building, Maudelle Shirek Building, and Civic Center Park are within Berkeley's "Civic Center District Overlay" area and subject to a 50-foot height limit and restrictions on use (BMC Chapter 23E.98). The Overlay District was established in 2014 to preserve and promote the area as a place of cultural heritage, historic preservation, civic and community activity, and cultural and education uses. Overlay District boundaries and allowable uses are noted in Figure 1.1 and below.

### Uses Permitted in Civic Center Overlay District (BMC Chapter 23E.98.030)

- Libraries
- Judicial Courts
- Museums
- Parks and Playgrounds
- Public Safety and Emergency Services
- Government Agencies and Institutions
- Public Schools / Educational Facilities
- Non-Profit Cultural, Arts, Environmental, Community Service, and Historical Organizations
- Live Performance Theatre
- Public Market

East of Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. Way, most of the Overlay District falls within the Downtown Area Plan (DAP) boundary and C-DMU Downtown Mixed Use District (BMC Chapter 23E.68). Unless superseded by the Civic Center Overlay District, improvements east of MLK Jr. Way must conform to DAP policies and C-DMU "Buffer Area" regulations.

West of Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. Way, the Maudelle Shirek Building conforms with Overlay District provisions but is otherwise a non-conforming use within Berkeley's "R-2 Restricted Two-Family Residential District" (BMC Chapter 23D.28).

### Circulation Improvements →

Existing and planned pedestrian and bicycle circulation improvements include: MLK Jr. Way signal & crosswalk improvements at Center Street and Allston Way (connecting west), separated bike-way improvements along Milvia (connecting north/south), and landscape & pedestrian amenities along Center Street & Allston Way (connecting east).

### Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park

While MLK Jr. Civic Center Park occupies a central place in Berkeley, the Downtown Street & Open Space Improvement Plan (SOSIP) did not address the design of or funding of MLK Jr. Civic Center Park improvements. Comprehensive planning for Civic Center Park has not been undertaken since the 1990s. Only general guidance is provided by the Open Space Element of Berkeley’s General Plan (2002) to:

*involve the community in “every aspect” of park design (Policy OS-5),*

*give high priority to disadvantaged and underserved populations (Policy OS-7), and*

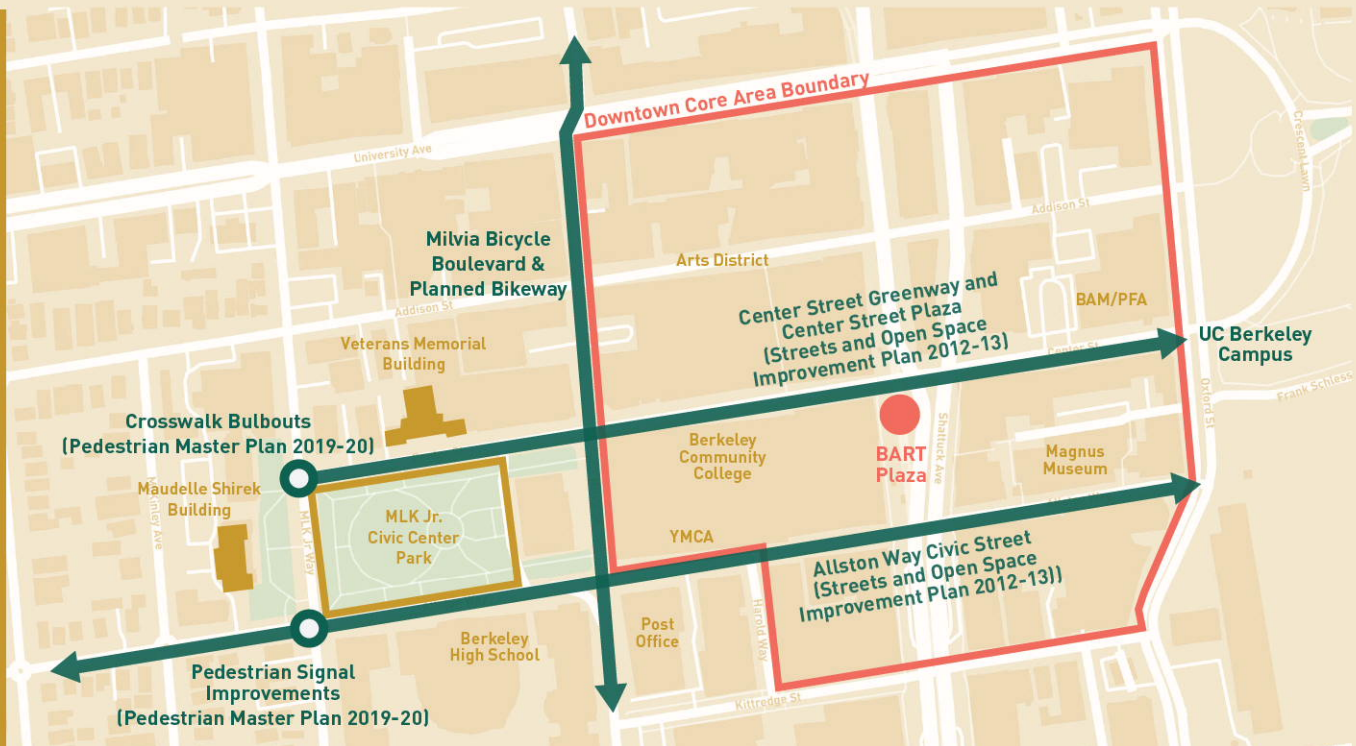
*prioritize limited fiscal resources to maintaining and improving existing open space and recreation facilities.*

### Circulation Improvements

Berkeley’s General Plan, DAP, and SOSIP emphasize pedestrian-friendly environments, bicycle connectivity, and traffic calming. The DAP states explicitly to “give pedestrians priority,” and the General Plan says to consider

*the partial or complete closure of Center Street .... to promote pedestrian ... vitality and enhance Civic Center Park use and appearance. (Policy LU-20)*

Regarding Center Street, the SOSIP says:





## Existing Conditions

*Create a continuous green corridor and pedestrian connection between Civic Center Park, BART and Center Street Plaza. (Policy OS-1.6)*

Allston Way also connects to BART and Shattuck Avenue, and is one of few streets that extends without interruption from West Berkeley to UC Berkeley. While Allston's narrow right-of-way limits options, SOSIP says Allston should become a "civic street" that uses light standards, paving, and other special features to make Allston more recognizable and to support pedestrian activity (OS-1.15). Additionally, Allston is a principal point of entry to Berkeley High School, and is a major automobile drop-off zone and place of students coming and going. In 2014, permeable brick pavers were installed on Allston from MLK Jr. Way to Milvia Street to capture urban run-off (stormwater carrying oil and other street related pollutants) and calm traffic.

The Milvia Bicycle Boulevard is an important bicycle facility that connects to North and South Berkeley. Milvia is slated for improvement from being a bicycle route (where bikes mix with traffic north of Allston) to having a "bike track" (separated from traffic) for its entirety in Downtown.

## Environmental Sustainability

The Downtown Area Plan promotes buildings, streets and open space that model best practices for sustainability (Goal ES-2). Relevant to the Civic Center,

DAP calls for sustainability by calling for:

- *re-use of buildings or portions of buildings (ES-4.1),*
- *green (LEED Gold or equivalent) building performance (ES-4.1-4.9),*
- *giving priority to pedestrians over vehicles (ES-3.5), and*
- *green streets and green infrastructure (ES-3.2 & ES-5.1-5.3).*

## Building Re-Use & Context-Sensitive Design

Alterations to and new construction associated with the Veterans Memorial Building, Maudelle Shirek Building, and MLK Jr. Civic Center Park will be subject to design review by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, which will implement DAP policies including:

*Preserve historic buildings and sites of Downtown, and provide where appropriate for their adaptive reuse and/or intensification. (LU-1.1)*  
*Encourage continuity and harmony*

### Center Street Greenway Connection →

Center Street connects the Civic Center area to BART, Shattuck businesses, Berkeley Community College, and UC Berkeley's campus. Berkeley's Downtown Street & Open Space Improvement Plan illustrates how landscape improvements and pedestrian amenities might be added to Center to better integrate the Civic Center area with the rest of Downtown.

*between old and new construction ...[such as through] materials, cadence/modulation, color, fenestration & entry patterns, cornice lines, massing, roof form, building “build-to lines,” and other architectural devices. (HD-3.1) [R]ecruit a community-serving use for [the Veterans Memorial Building’s] main floor. (LU-1.4)*

DAP policies and BMC zoning regulations do not require that historic building re-use and intensification provide the same amount of on-site parking and open space as new construction.

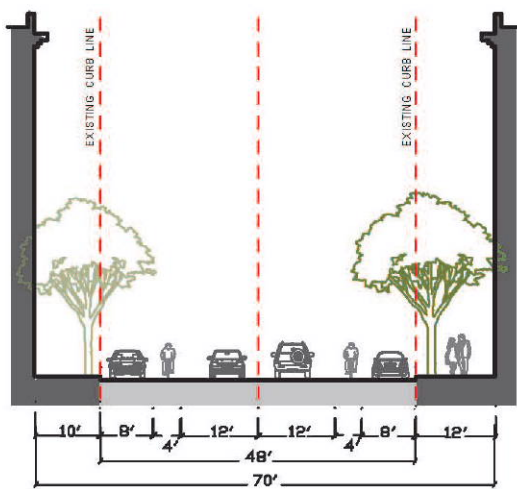
The Veterans Memorial Building and MLK Civic Center Park are in the Commercial – Downtown Mixed Use (C-DMU) zoning district which comes with the following pertinent parking requirements; only substantial net additional floor area would

be subject to parking requirements. If net new floor area exceeds the existing floor area, plus 1,000 square feet or up to 25% of existing floor area whichever is less, the parking requirement can be modified with a Use Permit because the building is within one-third mile of BART and within one-quarter mile of a publicly-accessible parking facility. Alternatively, a fee may be paid in lieu of required parking on-site.

The Maudelle Shirek building lies within the Restricted Two-Family Residential (R-2). For development on the Maudelle Shirek parcel, R-2 explicit off-street parking requirements are limited to: dwellings, community care facilities, libraries, and rooming houses. The Zoning Adjustment Board is to determine on-site parking requirements for all other uses, including community and civic uses envisioned by the Civic Center Vision Plan.

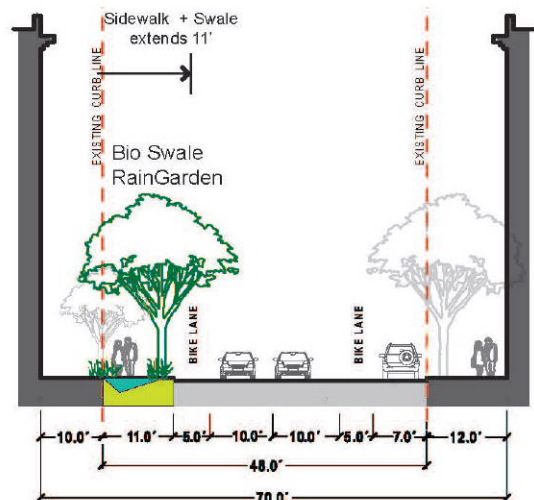
↓ Center St, Existing Condition

Source: Berkeley’s Streets and Open Space Improvement Plan (SOSIP 2012-13)

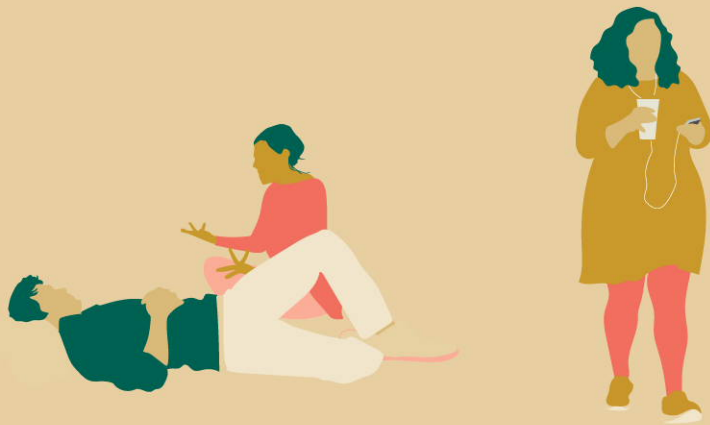


↓ Center St, Greenway Concept

Source: Berkeley’s Streets and Open Space Improvement Plan (SOSIP 2012-13)



Existing Conditions



1.2.3

# Public Space Public Life Study



## 1.2.3

# Public Space, Public Life Study

## A Gehl-developed method focused on putting people at the center of urban change – measure what you care about!

As a fundamental component of the site assessment, a Public Life, Public Space Study was conducted in Berkeley Civic Center to better understand how people use the space today. The daily rhythms and patterns of public life were measured and recorded as part of a people-first approach to design.

As a matter of course, all cities conduct detailed analyses of traffic and parking. Motor vehicles are ever-present in the planning process. It is unsurprising then that many plans and policies are oriented around the behavior of cars, instead of people. However, a growing number of cities now count and observe how people actually use the city, how they move through the city and what they do when they spend time there.

Measuring how people use space allows cities to optimize public space for human comfort and active mobility, allowing for holistic solutions that take all users of the public realm into account.

### Why study public life?

Collecting public life data allows us to:

- Identify opportunities to increase quality of life for people
- Tell stories and make evidence-based arguments for change
- Measure and re-measure to understand and visualize the impact that our work has on people



**Public Life** is the social activity that takes place in everyday public spaces – on streets, in parks and plazas, and in the spaces between buildings. It's what people create together when they live their lives outside of their homes, schools, workplaces and cars.



# Public Life data collected in and around Civic Center

## Mode Movement Counts

Measures how many people pass through a space and by what means. These counts note whether people are moving as a pedestrian, cyclist, mobility-impaired person, or on an e-scooter/skateboard.



## Age & Gender Movement Counts

Measures how many people pass through a space while also noting the age and gender representation of each person. Age and gender representation data gives us a better sense of who is using a particular space, who does not feel welcome to do so, or who is unable to access it at all. As this tool provides observational data, it will not always accurately reflect the gender identities of people in the space.



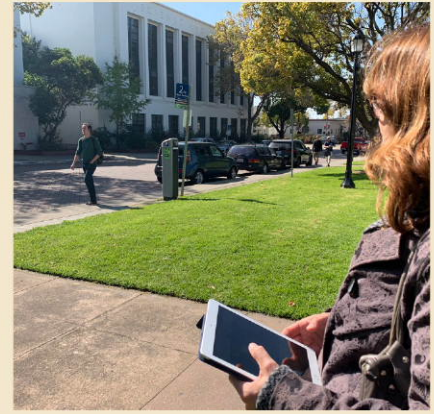
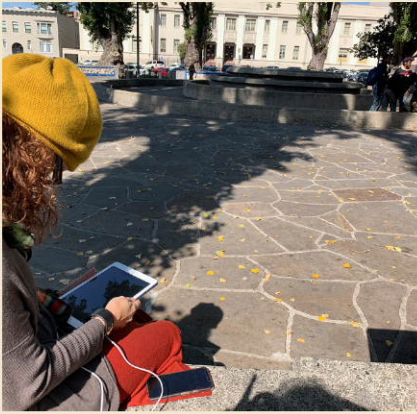
## Stationary Activity Mapping

Provides insights into where people are spending time, what they are doing, and how they are occupying space. It provides a snapshot of all the activities happening in the survey area at a given time and records people's observed age and gender representation.



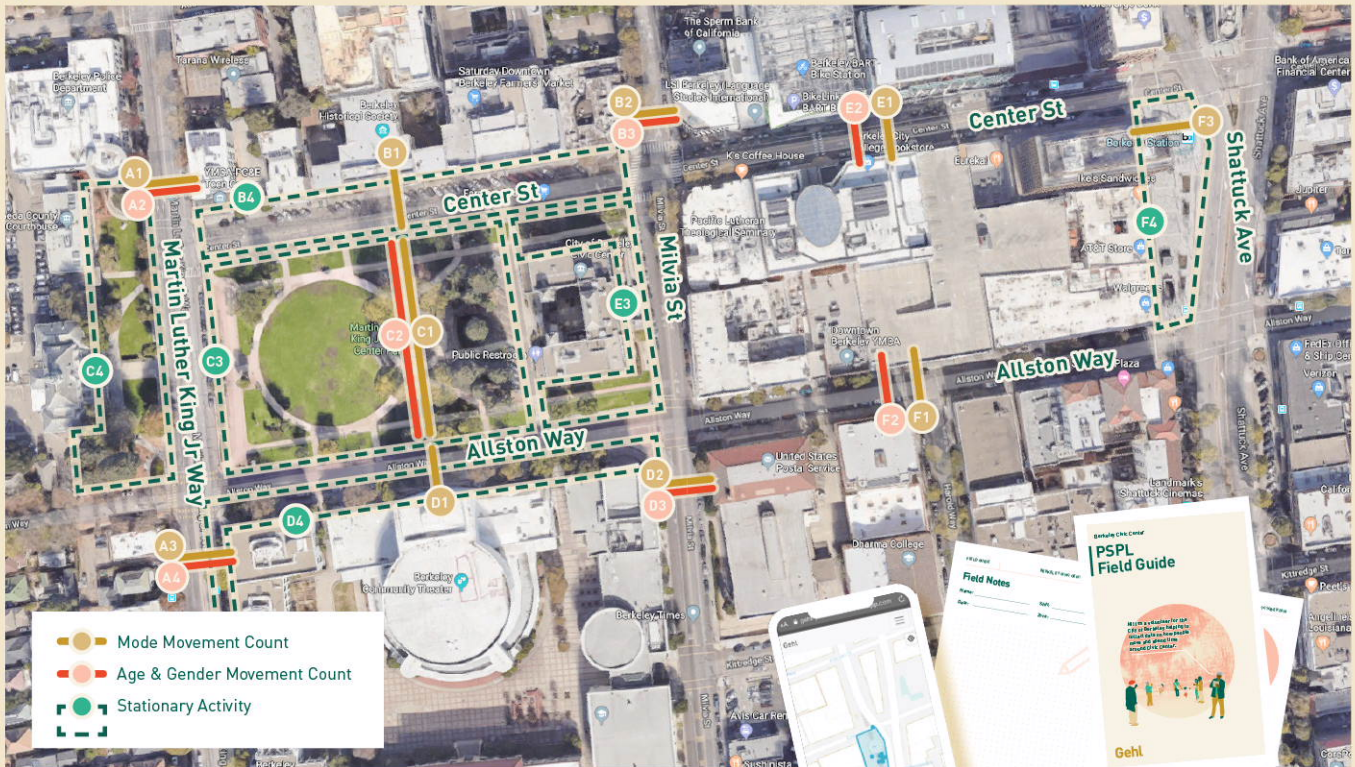
## Our Survey's Guiding Questions

- What are the daily patterns of life in Civic Center?
- Who does Civic Center invite and who is missing?
- How are the surrounding buildings supporting (or hindering) Public Life?
- How is Civic Center connected to the pulse of activity on Shattuck Avenue?



The Berkeley Public Space, Public Life Survey was conducted in October 2019. The survey occurred over the course of a weekday (October 15) and weekend (October 19) and enlisted the help of 21 volunteers including local residents and university students, who surveyed on site alongside Gehl team members.

↑ Survey Volunteers



↑ Public Space, Public Life Survey  
Survey locations, volunteer field guide and digital data collection platform



# Public Space, Public Life Key Findings

Overall, Civic Center isn't performing so well ...

**1** Civic Center is not in the center, it's on the sidelines

**2** Civic Center is not a destination

**3** Civic Center does not attract

**4** During Farmers' Markets, there's not much spillover into the park

**5** There aren't many park activities in Civic Center Park

**6** A few dominant activities negatively impact the perception of safety

**BUT, the right ingredients are there ...**

**7**

**Civic Center is surrounded by a high density of life and a legacy of gathering**

**9**

**With the right invitations people do want to spend time here**

**8**

**Civic Center is surrounded by public buildings awaiting their next act**

**10**

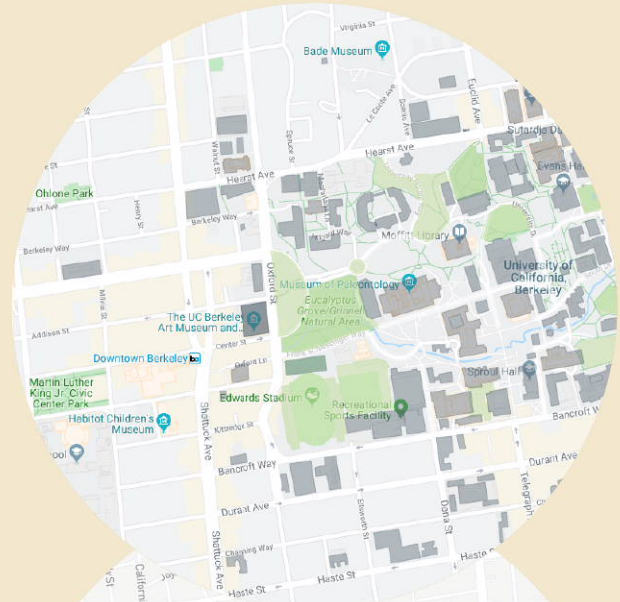
**Civic Center is a multi-generational space**

# 1 Civic Center is not in the center, it's on the sidelines

↓ UC Berkeley Campus Map  
Civic Center Park just barely makes it onto UC Berkeley's map

## People aren't choosing Civic Center

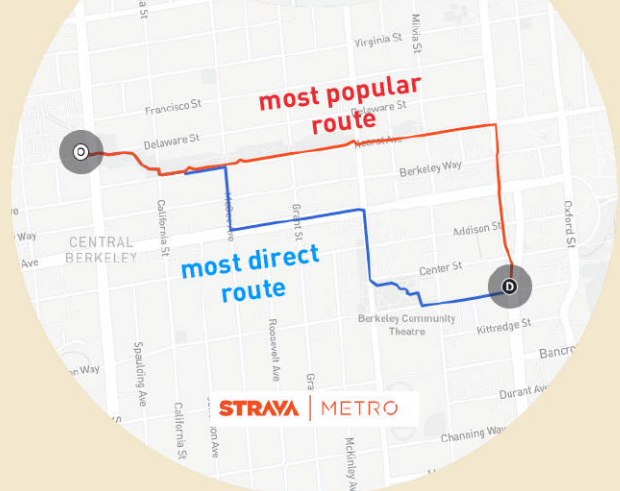
Despite the proximity to the downtown commercial core, UC Berkeley, and other major destinations, people aren't moving through Civic Center.

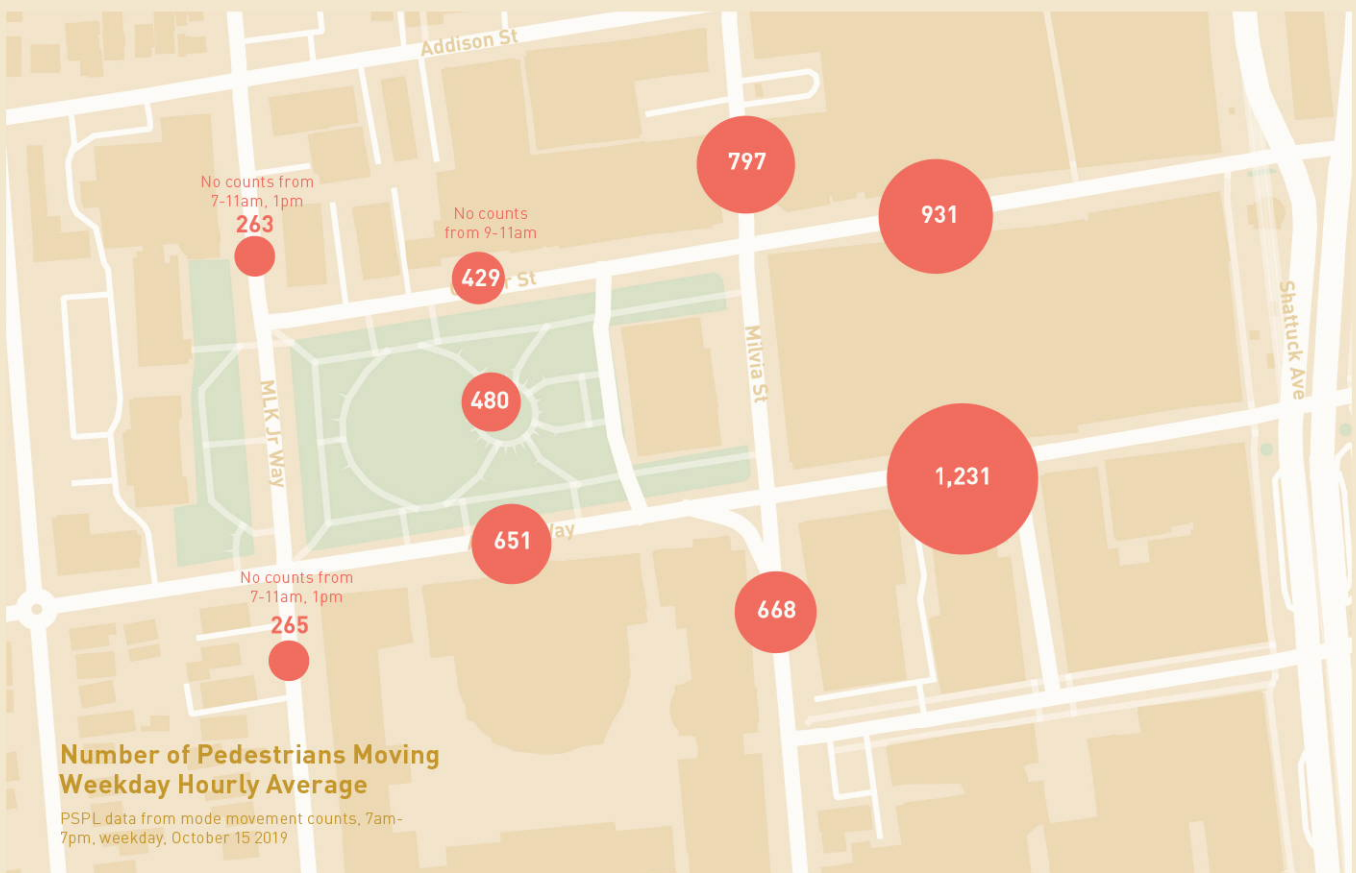
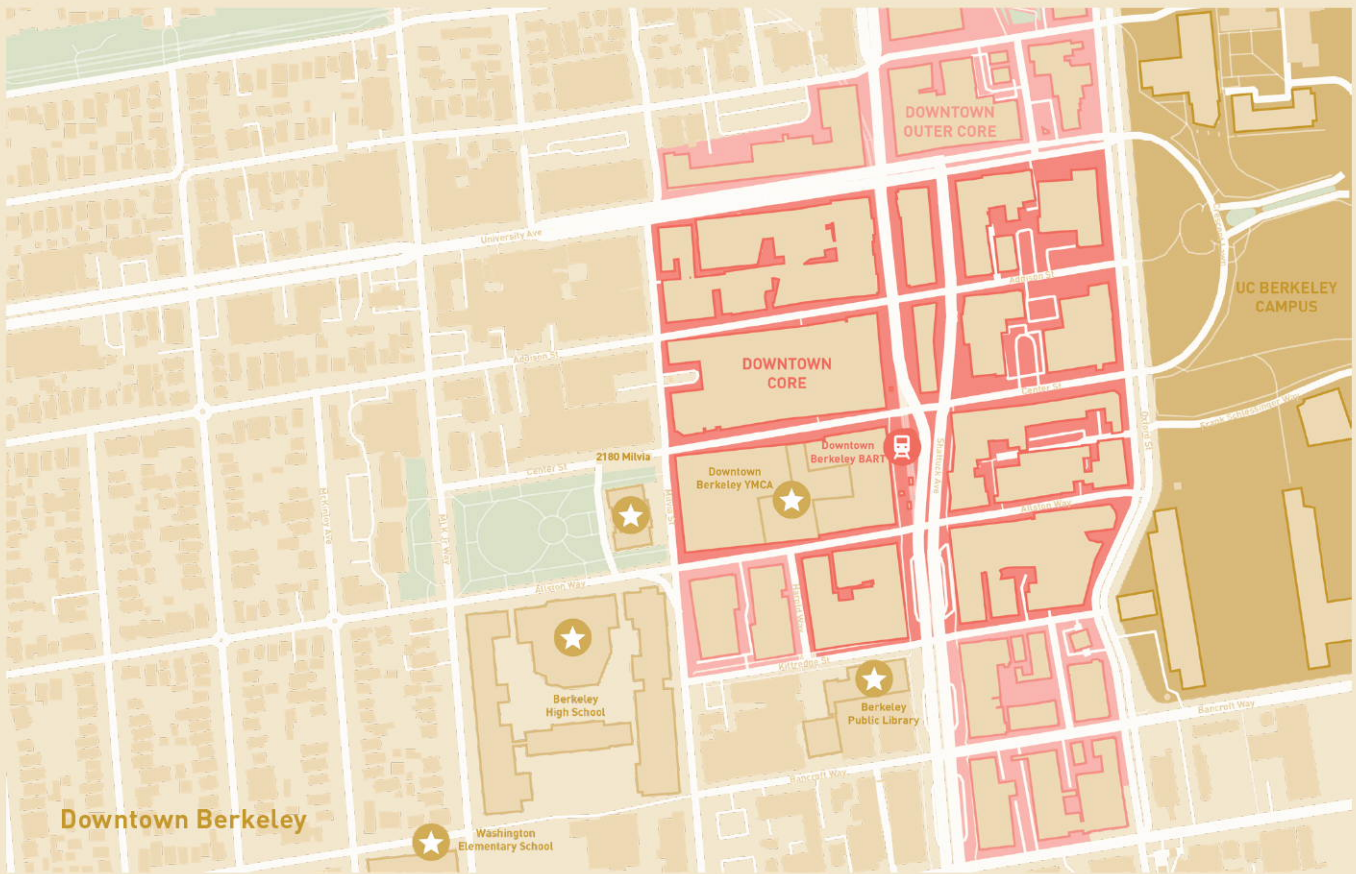


### Direct vs. Popular Routes, Strava\* Metro Data →

The Strava community chooses running routes that avoid Civic Center Park, even when it's the most direct route.

\*Strava is a social fitness network, that is primarily used to track cycling and running exercises, using GPS data.

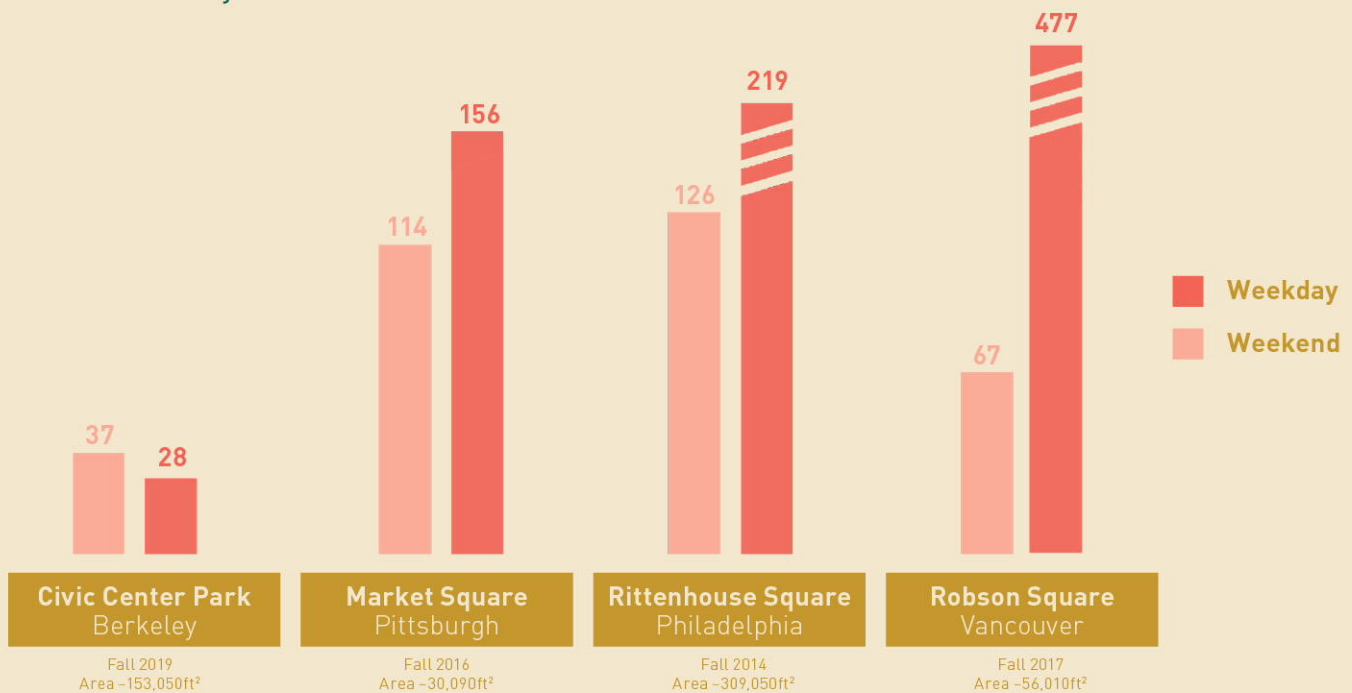




# 2 Civic Center is not a destination

## People aren't choosing to spend time in Civic Center

Civic Center Park isn't inviting people to spend time. Especially when compared to other civic spaces and public squares, Berkeley's Civic Center is falling short of its potential to act as a center of public life and activity.



### Stationary Activity, Hourly Average

PSPL data for the number of people staying in MLK Jr. Park from Stationary Mapping Activity, 7am-7pm, weekday + weekend, October 15 + 19 2019



“  
It’s a general meeting place. It’s not  
anyone’s turf, it’s like Switzerland.”

–Frequent Civic Center Visitor



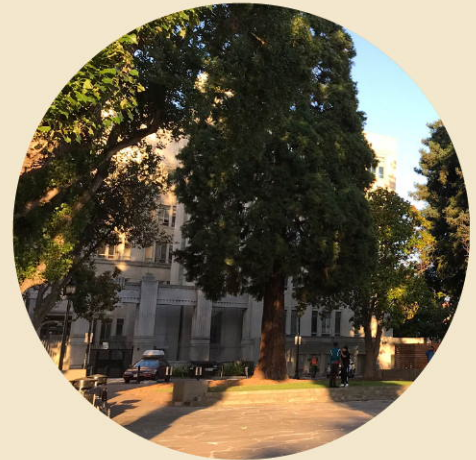
“  
I just come to this park because it’s  
here and right next to school, it’s  
nothing special.”

–Berkeley High School Student

# 3 Civic Center does not attract

## Monumental buildings give their backs to the park

Several buildings around the edge of Civic Center have inactive facades and treat the park as their 'back of house' with blank walls, loading entrances and exit doors facing the public space.



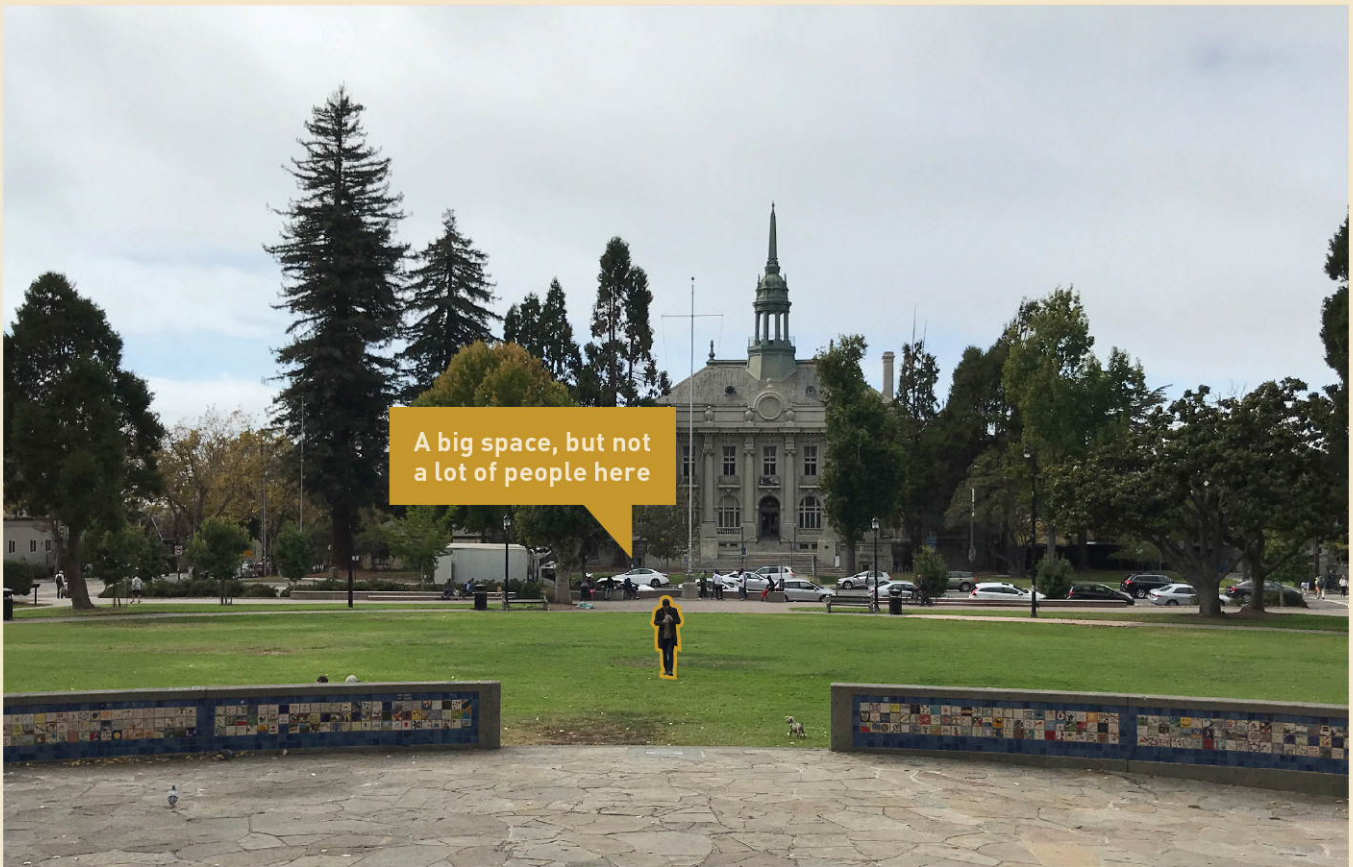
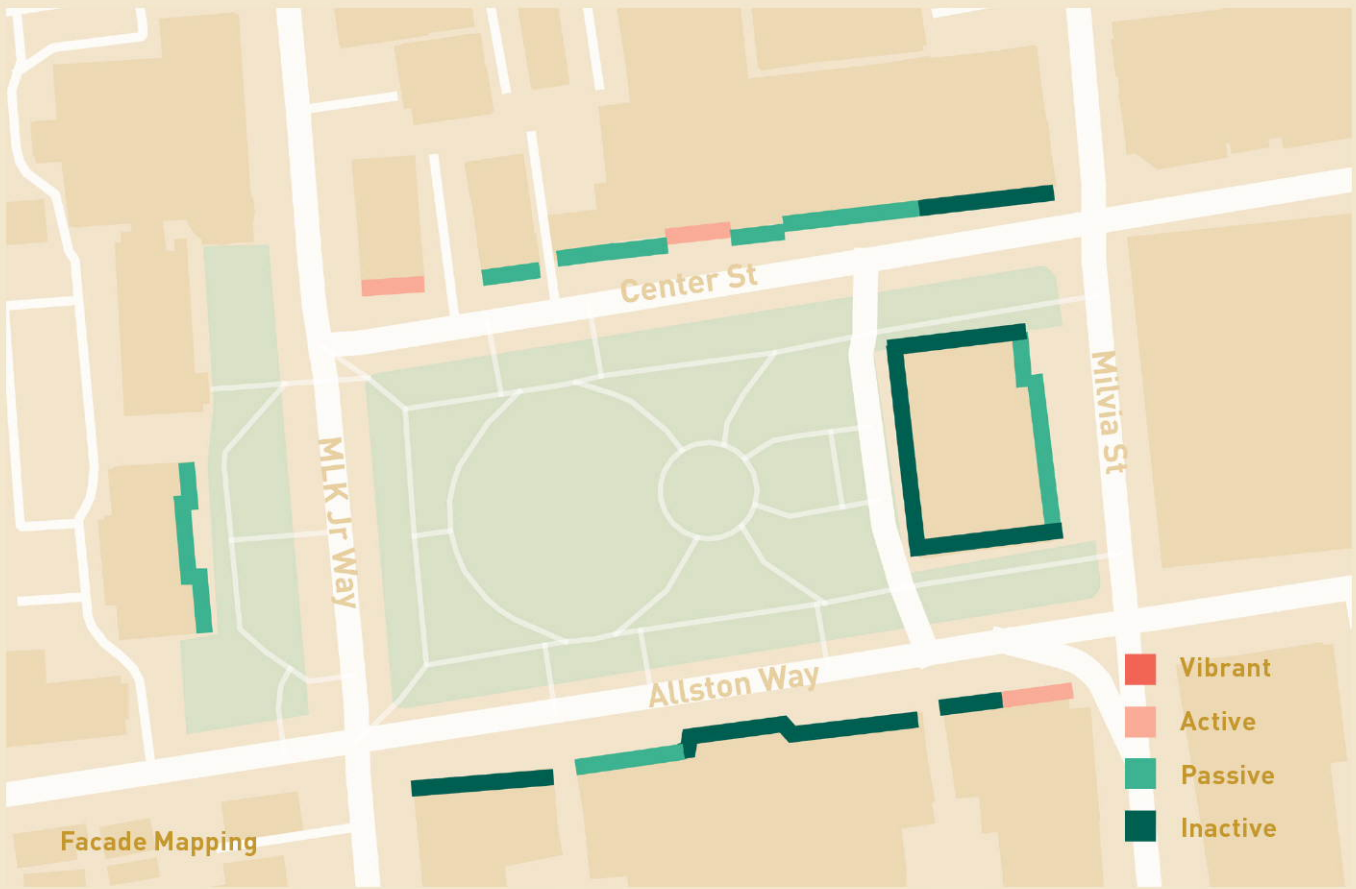
### **2180 Milvia**

With its entrance on Milvia St, 2180 gives its back to the park



### **Berkeley Community Theater**

The facade facing the park is a blank wall with a service entry





# 4 During Farmers' Markets, there's not much spillover into the park

## The influx of people during the Farmer's Market doesn't bring more people to Civic Center Park

The number of people who are spending time in Civic Center Park doesn't change much over the course of the day despite the increased number of people coming to Center Street for the Farmer's Market midday.



**Farmer's Market**  
**1,092**  
hourly moving  
peak  
weekend, 11am

VS



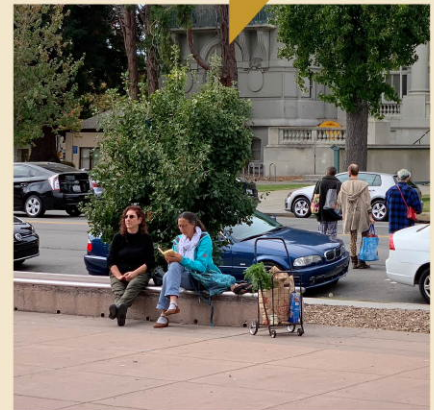
**BART Plaza**  
**930**  
hourly moving  
average  
weekend

### Farmer's Market vs. BART Plaza

At its peak hour, the flow of pedestrians moving through the Farmer's Market on Center Street is about the same as the hourly average for the BART plaza.



↑ Little spillover activity into the park from the Farmers Market



# 5 There aren't many park activities in Civic Center Park

## People aren't engaged in many cultural or recreational activities

The activity breakdown of people in Civic Center shows that people aren't spending time playing, exercising or participating in cultural events or performances – all activities that you would expect to happen in a park!

## There aren't many little kids spending time in the park

Civic Center Park isn't very sticky for toddlers and kids! Stickiness is the ratio of people moving through (pedestrian counts) per person spending time (stationary activities). The 'stickiness' ratio for toddlers and kids shows that this age group isn't choosing to spend time in Civic Center Park.



### Weekend Stickiness, 0-4 & 5-14 year olds Civic Center Park

PSPL data from age and gender movement counts, 7am-7pm, weekend, October 19 2019 (peak for toddlers & kids at 3pm)

Stickiness is the ratio of people moving through (pedestrian counts) per person spending time (staying activities)

weekday



weekday



Stationary Activity Breakdown  
Civic Center

PSPL data from stationary mapping,  
7am-7pm, overall, October 15 + 19 2019



# 6 A few dominant activities negatively impact the perception of safety

## The gender breakdown in Civic Center Park is unbalanced

Generally, public spaces that have a balanced (or higher) ratio of women indicates that the space has a high perception of safety. In the park in Civic Center, the low ratio of women could indicate an underlying sense that the space doesn't feel safe or welcoming.



### ↑ Representation of Women

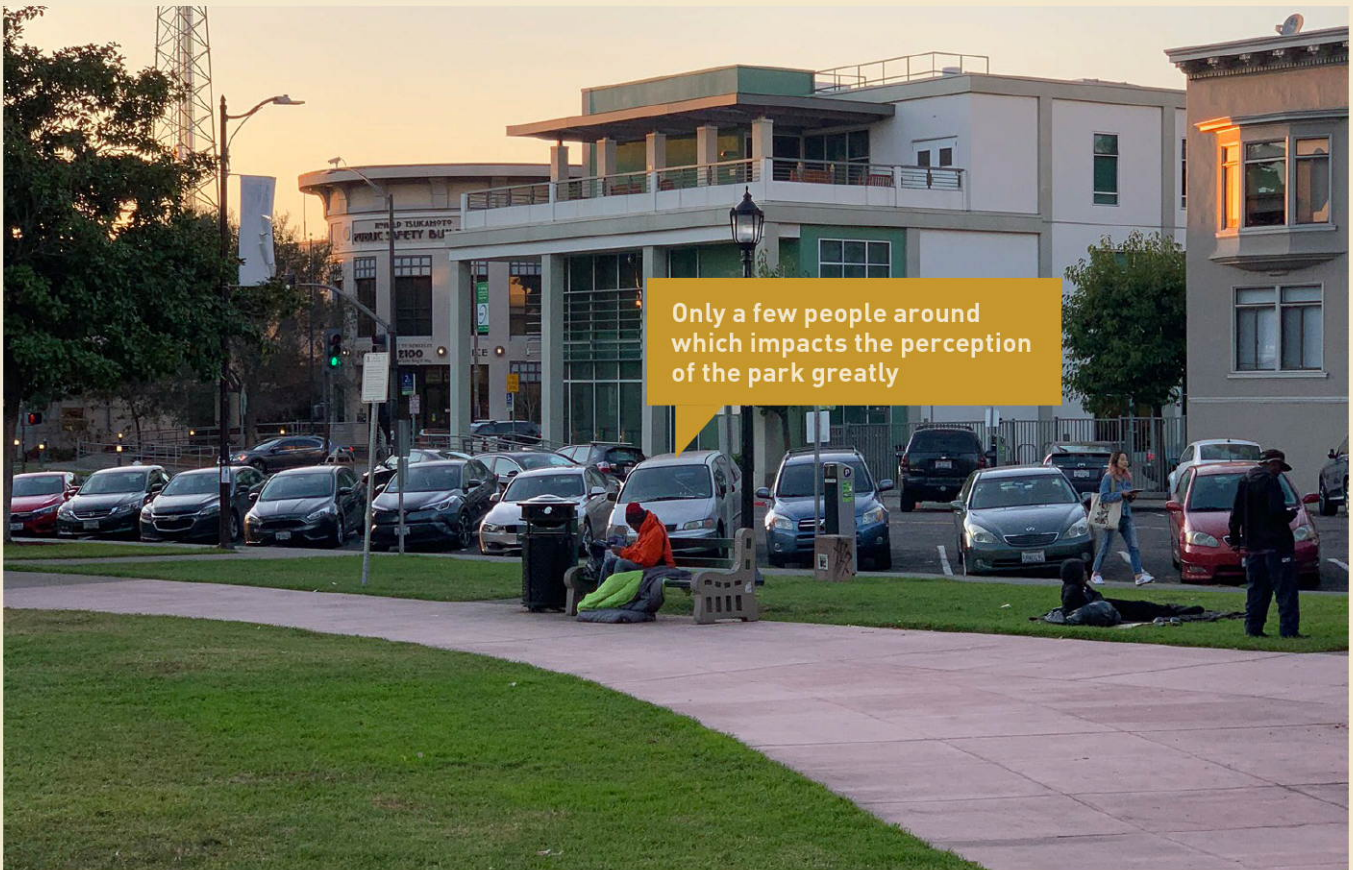
A higher percentage of women generally indicates a higher perception of safety. While the BART Plaza on Shattuck has a relatively balanced gender representation, fewer women spend time in the park.



### ↑ People Encamped/Sleeping

While not many in number (3 people), certain activities take up a lot of mental space.

PSPL data from stationary mapping,  
7am - 7pm, OVERALL, October 15 + 19 2019



Only a few people around which impacts the perception of the park greatly

↑ Civic Center, Berkeley

↓ Patricia's Green, San Francisco



Patricia's Green in Hayes Valley, San Francisco, is an example of an open space that invites a range of uses and users, where one single activity doesn't dominate the space.

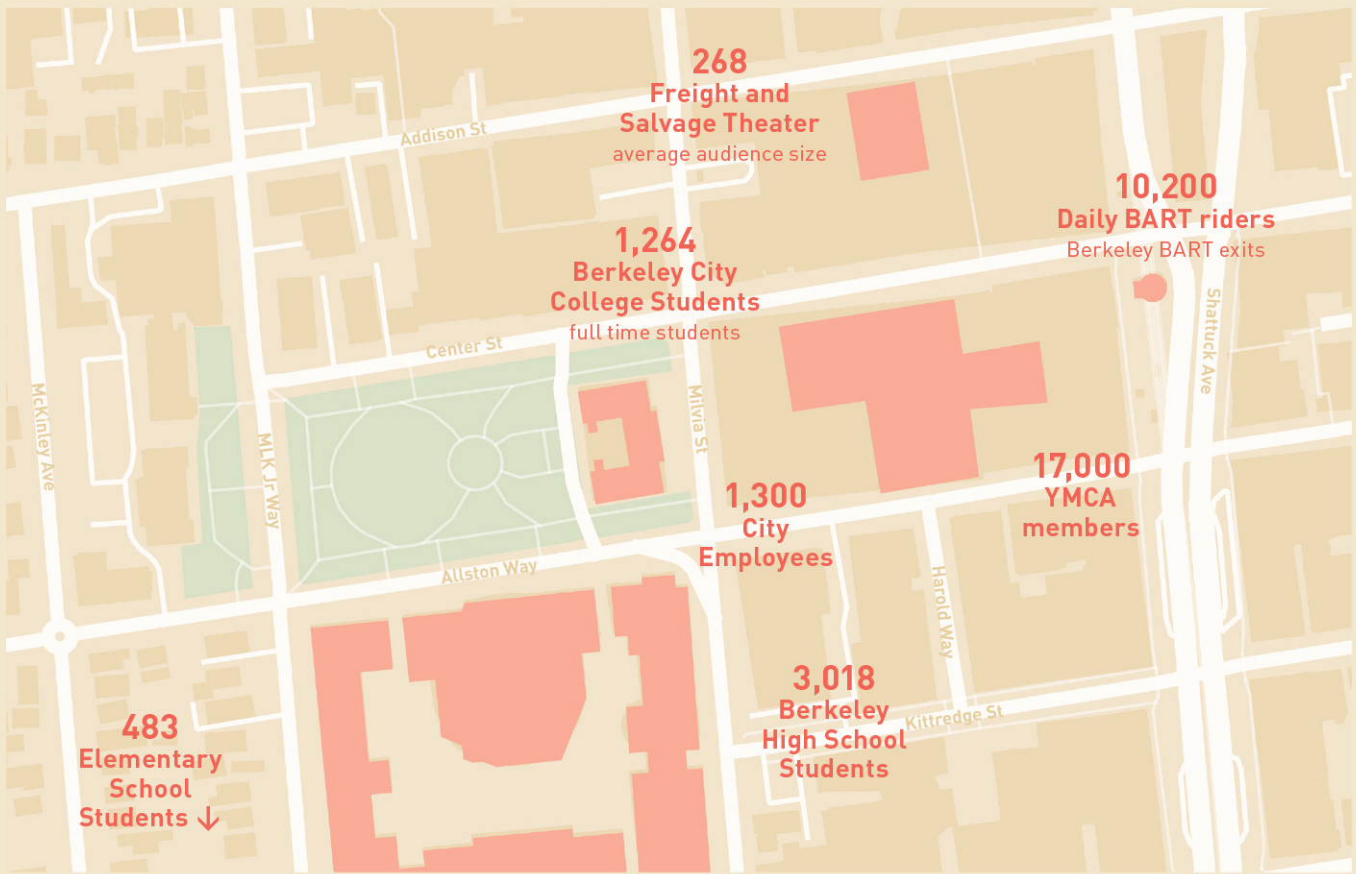
If there are many activities happening, a single activity (like 'encamped'), doesn't impact the space very much

So important, yet so difficult to achieve

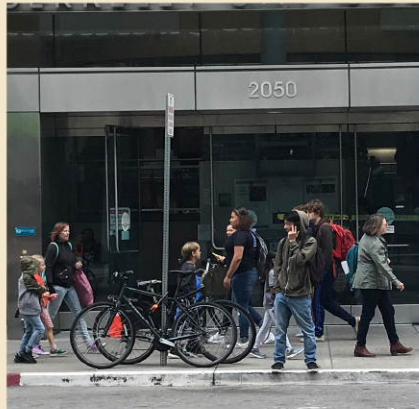
# 7 Civic Center is surrounded by a high density of life + legacy of gathering

## People are already around Civic Center

A challenge for any public space is attracting people to the area but in the case of Berkeley's Civic Center, the park is already surrounded by numerous institutions and downtown destinations with high volumes of people.



↑ Berkeley High School



↑ Center Street



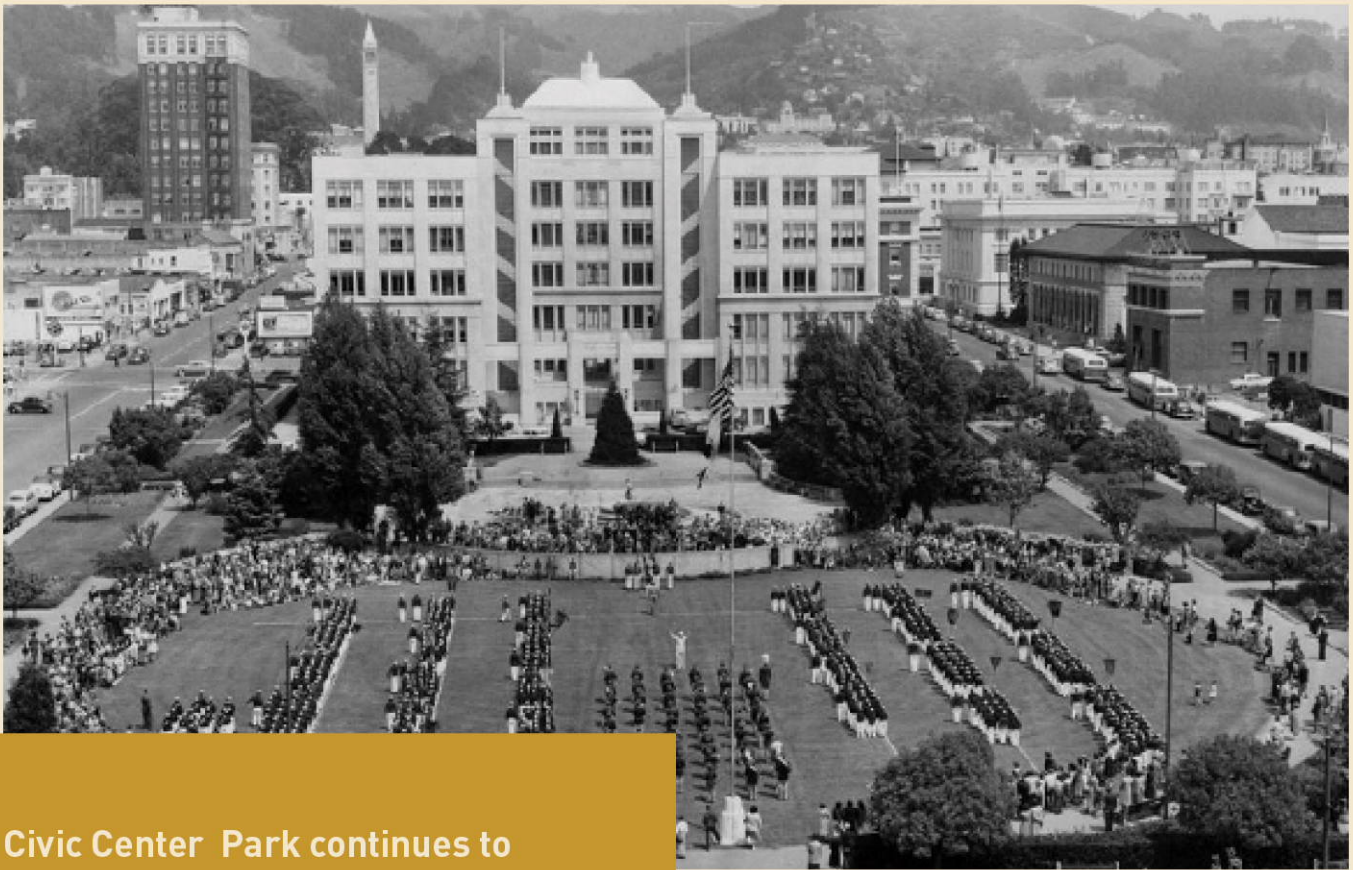
↑ YMCA



On Saturdays, the **Farmers' Market** attracts a large number of people and transforms Center Street.



Existing Conditions



Civic Center Park continues to work well as a gathering space for civic and festive special events.

↑ Civic Center Park<sup>1</sup>, 1952



↑ Civic Center Park<sup>2</sup>, 1971



↑ Civic Center Park<sup>2</sup>, 1971

1 - Berkeley Historical Plaque Project Photo, BAHA Archives  
2 - Photos used with permission, courtesy of the Nick DeWolf Foundation © the Nick DeWolf Foundation



↑ PowWow, Oct 2019



↑ Old Time Music Festival, SEP 2019



↑ Old Time Music Festival, SEP 2019



↑ Half Marathon, 2019



↑ Black Lives Matter Movement, JUN 2020

↑ Black Lives Matter Movement, JUN 2020

# 8 Civic Center is surrounded by public buildings awaiting their next act

The architecture is interesting and varied – lots of potential!

There are several public buildings surrounding Civic Center park that are architecturally very interesting and varied in character. A diverse cast of architectural characters frame the park, each with its own legacy and potential.



↑ Public Buildings, Berkeley Civic Center



↑ Maudelle Shirek Building



↑ YMCA Teen Center



↑ Veteran's Memorial Building

# 9 With the right invitations, people do want to spend time here

2180 Milvia's edges and ledges are magnetic – people spend time where they're comfortable

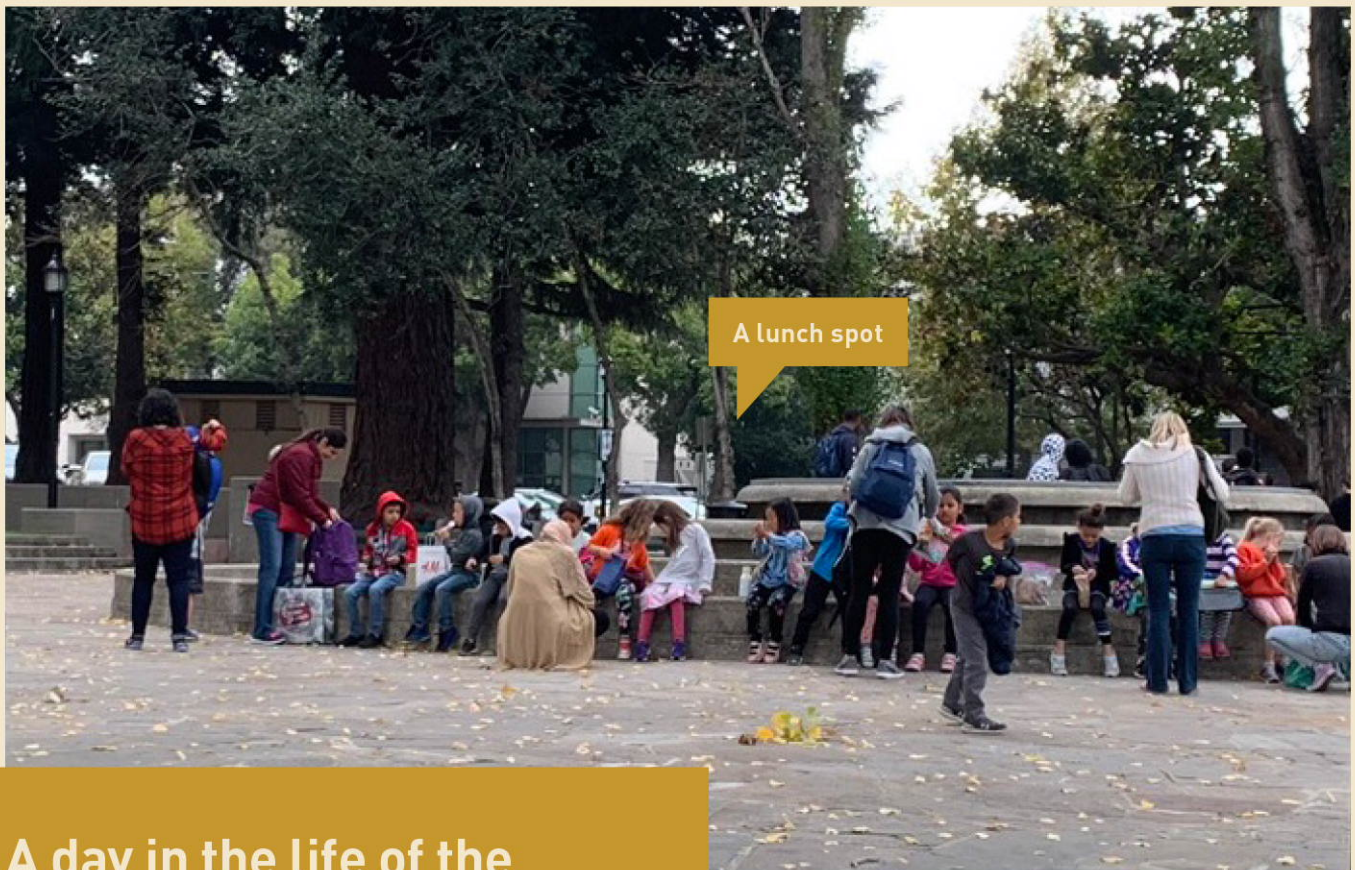
There may not be a lot of people spending time in Civic Center Park but, when they are there, they spend time on the edges and ledges. These hot-spots are human-scaled and provide invitations to enjoy the positive aspects of the climate, like soaking up the sun.



Human-scaled spaces with comfortable micro-climates give people a reason to spend time on the edges and ledges.



Existing Conditions



A day in the life of the  
Civic Center Park Fountain

