

(This presentation is based on the one shown at the South Berkeley community meeting Feb. 11, 2006, with explanatory notes added at the bottom of some slides.)

# South Berkeley Area Project: **SoBa**

## Revitalization, Development and the Arts

**A Project of the City of Berkeley, BART and the  
South Berkeley Neighborhood Development Corporation**

(The area around Ashby BART is known by several names, including Lorin and the Ashby Arts District. The name SoBa was chosen to signal a different prospect for creating a new neighborhood to include all these ideas and identifications.)

(Aerial view of the proposed project parcel and surrounding area.)



# Opportunities

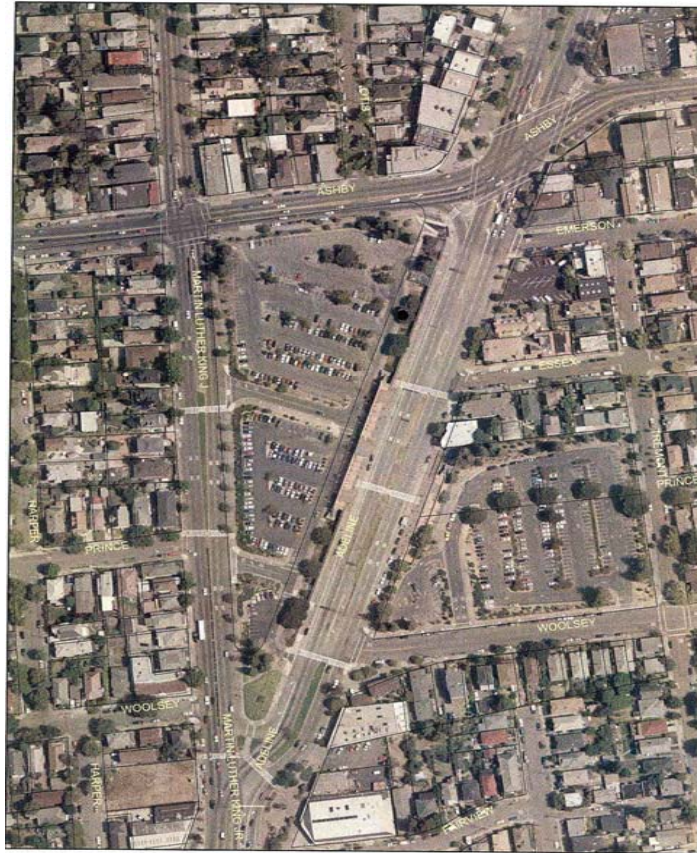
- **We have an historically unique opportunity to plan for a mixture of housing, residential, incomes, ages**
- **We can deliberately incorporate performing, creating and experiencing arts into all aspects of public space design**

# City policies and citizen visions advocating development of housing and retail at Ashby BART

- **South Berkeley Area Plan, January, 1990**  
“The South Berkeley community has expressed an interest in mixed commercial and residential development on the site, with some degree of community oversight and non-profit participation.”
- **Council Policy, February, 2001**  
“Adopt policy guidelines that the west parking lot at the Ashby BART Station be developed with housing as a top priority. To the extent possible, housing should be affordable and available to public sector workers. If necessary, replacement parking and movement of Berkeley Flea Market to another site should be considered.”
- **Berkeley General Plan, December, 2001**  
“Encourage affordable housing or mixed-use development including housing on the air rights above the Ashby BART station and parking lot west of Adeline Street.”

(Over the years, the City Council, the South Berkeley community and Berkeleyans in general have expressed an interest in development at the West parking lot site; such interest was codified into the City General Plan. At the meeting, a handout was distributed with the full text of the cited portions of relevant Plans.)

# SoBa Partnership



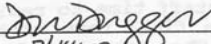
# Previous Plans for Ashby BART - 1

## "Vista College Project" – 1992

"In 1992, the Board authorized the General Manager to execute an MOU with the City of Berkeley to pursue the Vista College Project at the Ashby BART Station. Due to lack of funding the Vista College Project was not pursued..."

(There have been several "plans" for development at the site, which were not discussed with the public, did not have funding for staff and expertise to move forward, and fell through.)

**EXECUTIVE DECISION DOCUMENT** 11

<b>GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL:</b>  <b>DATE:</b> 3/14/97	<b>GENERAL MANAGER ACTION REQ'D:</b> Approve and forward to PAAL Committee <b>BOARD INITIATED ITEM</b> <input type="checkbox"/>					
<b>NARRATIVE:</b> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ashby Joint Development</b></p> <p><b>PURPOSE:</b> To obtain Board authorization to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Berkeley to pursue development of the air rights at the Ashby BART Station.</p> <p><b>DISCUSSION:</b> On October 22, 1964 an agreement was signed between BART and the City of Berkeley (the "City") which provided the City with an option of having the BART system operate subsurface or a combination of subsurface, at grade and aerial. That agreement, in addition, gave the City an option for the air rights at the Ashby BART Station. Since 1964, through a series of agreements, the City has maintained its option to purchase the air rights for \$100,000. The agreements are ambiguous as to whether the air rights are measurable from the depressed parking lot or from the street level.</p> <p>In 1992, the Board authorized the General Manager to execute an MOU with the City of Berkeley to pursue the Vista College Project at the Ashby BART Station. Due to lack of funding the Vista College Project was not pursued and the authorized MOU was never executed. The City now wishes to enter into a new MOU which is not specific as to any development project. In the MOU, the parties would agree to work cooperatively toward a definition of air rights and on development scenarios, and BART would consider separate sale of the eastern and western parking area air rights. The MOU would also stipulate that the City would be responsible for ensuring the reimbursement of BART's costs associated with review, coordination, construction monitoring and other District support for a development project.</p> <p>On January 28, 1997, the Berkeley City Council authorized the City Manager to execute an MOU with BART. Actual conveyance of any portion of the Ashby BART Station air rights will be addressed in a separate agreement and brought before the BART Board for approval. The Office of the General Council will approve the Memorandum of Understanding as to form.</p>						
<b>ROUTING NO.</b>	<b>PERSON</b>	<b>DUE DATE</b>	<b>INITIAL</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PROPOSAL AFFECTS</b> <small>(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)</small>	<b>COORDINATION TO COMPLETE ACTION</b> <small>(* IF APPROVALS REQUIRED)</small>
1.	D. Hill		DDH	2/24/97	OPERATING BUDGET <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPERATIONS CAPITAL BUDGET <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MAINTENANCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGM OPERATIONS <input type="checkbox"/> WEST BAY EXTENSIONS <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSIT SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT <input type="checkbox"/> EXTERNAL AFFAIRS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGM ADMINISTRATION <input type="checkbox"/> BUDGET & BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
2.	E. Low		EL	3/25/97	CAPITAL BUDGET <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MAINTENANCE CAPITAL PROGRAMS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> GENERAL COUNSEL <input type="checkbox"/> CONTROLLER TREASURER <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT SECRETARY
3.	J. Dunn		JD	3/27	GOVERNMENT RELATIONS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC INFO LABOR RELATIONS <input type="checkbox"/> PROCUREMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> BUDGET & BUSINESS MANAGEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT SECRETARY
4.	P. Oversier		PO	3/14	GOVERNMENT RELATIONS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC INFO LABOR RELATIONS <input type="checkbox"/> PROCUREMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> BUDGET & BUSINESS MANAGEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT SECRETARY
5.	H. Goldstrom		HG	2/25/97	LABOR RELATIONS <input type="checkbox"/> PROCUREMENT CIVIL RIGHTS <input type="checkbox"/> STAFFING	<input type="checkbox"/> BUDGET & BUSINESS MANAGEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT SECRETARY
6.					LABOR RELATIONS <input type="checkbox"/> PROCUREMENT CIVIL RIGHTS <input type="checkbox"/> STAFFING	<input type="checkbox"/> BUDGET & BUSINESS MANAGEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT SECRETARY
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FORM NO. 1163 (REV 3, 10/95)

# Previous Plans for Ashby BART - 2

## “Arts Village”

San Francisco Chronicle,  
July 15, 2005

“With the help of renowned architect, Bill Leddy, plans are underway to turn the station into an Art Village/BART Village.”

(There have been several “plans” for development at the site, which were not discussed with the public, did not have funding for staff and expertise to move forward, and fell through. This is another example of a “plan” which did not exist, did not actually have any of the elements described, and did not involve the community.)

FRIDAY, JULY 15, 2005

## THE ARTS

# Berkeley: Business owners, artists paint new future for area around Ashby BART

By Loohsa Khazzoom  
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

When Sam Dyke opened his People's Bazaar antiques store on Adeline Street in South Berkeley more than three decades ago, he was in a hub of activity. Bakeries, hardware stores, banks and many other small businesses ensured a steady flow of foot traffic.

Then came the Ashby BART station.

“BART as an eminent domain bought those properties (and) turned those businesses away. Many never reopened. We lost many small businesses because of that — especially minority businesses,” he recalls.

But now, the very entity that tore apart the old neighborhood is at the center of its revitalization. With the help of renowned architect Bill Leddy, plans are under way to turn the station — located at the corner of Ashby Avenue and Martin Luther King Blvd., on the border of North Oakland and South Berkeley — into an Art Village/BART Village.

“The BART system is 35 years old. It was designed with the spare modernism of the 1960s and 1970s — not the best design aesthetically,” says Nishaa Kalli, a senior planner with the transit agency. “We need to reinvent the station as the climate station. — We’re working to create a neighborhood-centered place with a new plaza area — to give a face to the street.”

A major problem, Kalli says, is that BART was designed for people to drive, park and ride, but the enormous parking lots created dead space separating the neighborhood. Now, with the help of local artists and business owners, the dead space is gradually coming back to life.

According to plans, the Ed Roberts Campus, currently under development, will be a full-scale community center, directly connected to BART on the campus’ lower level. Parking lots will go underground, leaving ample space for a promenade — to be lined with shops and cafes. The collective festive ambience, says Michael Caplan, assistant to the city manager of Berkeley, will serve as the gateway to a dynamic new arts district, which locals are referring to as “OH-Adeline.”

The only obstacle, Kalli says, is money. “We have to replace the majority of that parking in a structure. You’re talking big bucks, which gets back to state. Billions of dollars are being taken away and thrown into a big black hole called the state budget.”

Still, Kalli remains optimistic and dreams of what the neighborhood can become.

“Imagine saying, ‘Let’s go to Ashby this evening,’” she says, “then wandering through on gallery night, checking out people’s art, going around the corner to a poetry reading, hanging out at cafes.”

“We are already getting closer to what we envision as Artopia,” says Justin Katz, program director of Epic Arts Center, “where people know that there are these thriving places. — We have the concept, and now everyone is engaged.”

In 2003, on a mission to reconnect the community, Epic Arts Center — on Ashby Avenue, directly across the street from BART — spearheaded the formation of the Ashby Arts District, a consortium of local businesses and nonprofits dedicated to the arts, including La Peña Cultural Center, Nomad Cafe, Black Repertory Group, Triptych Gallery, Shotgun Players at the Ashby Stage, and the Northern California Land Trust.

“We’d noticed that there were several arts organizations and performance venues within walking distance in our area,” says Tanya Hurd, development director at Epic Arts, “so we began to lead an alliance with many of these venues.”

“The Ashby Arts District was born out of the desire of a group of artists to reach out to the community that they are rooted in,” says Kathy Madrid, curator of the Triptych Gallery. “We all live, or spend all of our time, in North Oakland/South Berkeley. This is our home. What makes the Ashby Arts District special is that we all care about what goes on in this neighborhood and want to contribute to its healthy growth — and that includes fostering an appreciation for the arts.”

A project between Triptych and the Walgreens store serves as one example of the neighborhood’s transformation. The drugstore donated display cases on the Adeline side of its building for displaying art. The store covers some of the cost, while Madrid oversees the display.

“That’s made it possible to inject a little life into an underutilized side walk,” Madrid says. “It also gives a national chain the chance to act locally and give back to the



JOHN STOKER / THE CHRONICLE

The Ashby BART station is at the hub of an area undergoing a commercial and artistic renaissance.

community. We have received e-mails from neighbors saying that they are more interested in shopping at this store because it facilitates an art space.”

The fusion of art and business, locals say, is one of the most exciting aspects of the Ashby Arts District — for both ideological and economic reasons.

**The fusion of art and business, locals say, is one of the most exciting aspects of the Ashby Arts District, for ideological and economic reasons.**

“Art has been relegated to a strange niche in today’s culture — we either see it as a commodity or an afterthought,” Katz says. “One of the major goals of the district is to connect and integrate the ‘arts community’ within the fabric of everyday life, hopefully uplifting the community as a whole in the process.”

Another goal is to keep artists in the neighborhood.

“When the market starts saying, ‘We want to be here,’” Kalli

says, “when the land values start spinning out of control, how in the world can you maintain and keep artists?”

Anticipating that question, several Ashby Arts District members have already bought buildings — including Epic Arts, La Peña, and Nomad Cafe. Northern California Land Trust (NCLT) has purchased an office building on Shattuck at Woolsey, with the intention of renting out space at rates affordable to musicians, painters, and other artists — even if local property rates skyrocket.

“The NCLT became involved with the Ashby Arts District,” says Ian Winters, executive director of the organization, “as part of our long-standing commitment to the South Berkeley and North Oakland area — as a provider of permanently affordable community facilities (such as arts space and nonprofit office space) and permanently affordable housing.”

Winters is passionate about supporting the neighborhood, which he refers to as “a sort of wetlands/incubator for the arts,” and

emphasizes that local transportation and business play a crucial role in enhancing the neighborhood’s development. “To attract and retain an audience, whether from the neighborhood or from across the county, there needs to be all of the cultural pieces of a district, and somewhere you want to be before and after: pedestrian-friendly restaurants, shops, and the like.”

“The concept of dense urban development near transit hubs, enhanced by culture and the arts, does much to eliminate divides between population segments,” says Christopher Waters, owner of Nomad Cafe, a certified green business that also serves as an art gallery and live music venue. “I hope, with the development of the Ashby Arts District, to witness this ‘breaking down of borders’ — political, geographical, cultural and socioeconomic borders. I believe this is what the arts should bring to any community.”

E-mail comments to eastbaylife@sfchronicle.com.

# Caltrans Grant Proposal

**On October 14, 2005, the City, working with the South Berkeley Neighborhood Development Corporation, submitted a grant proposal to Caltrans for funding of a community planning process to guide potential development at Ashby BART.**

**The submission was approved by the Berkeley City Council Dec. 13.**

(In an attempt to fulfill the expressed interest in developing the site, Ed Church and City staff, in consultation with Councilmember Anderson and several community leaders, submitted a funding proposal which could begin to put the resources together for a real community planning process.)



# Caltrans Grant Proposal Submission Timeline

- **Sept. 26, 2005: Ed Church found out about Caltrans opportunity**
- **Sept. 30: after consultation with City staff, materials sent to City Manager and Planning Director, suggesting we apply**
- **Oct. 14: City signs off, delivered to Caltrans**

(The timeline for submitting the grant proposal was very tight.)

## **Caltrans Grant Proposal Timeline for Submission to City Council**

- **Oct. 14: submitted to Caltrans**
- **Early Nov: City Planning Director begins work to expedite report to Council to get the proposal to them before the end of the year**
- **Dec. 8: in Council packet**
- **Dec. 13: heard at Council meeting**

(Due to a heavy workload, the City's Planning Director was not able to work on the Council report necessary to begin the standard 6-8 week process for getting an item on the Council Agenda until two weeks after the proposal was submitted. The Council item was expedited, and went to Council December 13, 2005.)

## Some **SoBa** Project Elements

- **New housing to support vibrant street life & retail**
- **Housing for public employees**
- **Integration of arts into neighborhood design**
- **Community participation in planning**
- **Community economic participation in jobs generated by construction, retail, etc.**

# Discussion points for Public Process (from Caltrans proposal)

*Qualifications the public will be asked to consider will include the developer(s)'s ability to address:*

- **Building a dense, compact transit village with local retail and a minimum of 300 units of housing**
- **A minimum of 20% low-income housing as well as the potential for market rate condos and rental units**
- **Increased pedestrian, wheelchair and bicycle access and safety design for the site and surrounding community**
- **Coordination with job training and placement organizations for construction, retail and maintenance jobs created by the project, to benefit local residents**
- **Integration of spaces for performing, creating and exhibiting art**
- **Integration of the Berkeley Flea Market into the area**
- **Housing for local public sector workers, including teachers and City employees.**

(This is a direct quote from the Caltrans proposal, which specifies some of the project elements that the public would be asked to consider when drafting the Request for Qualifications of potential developer(s), which would go to Council for approval. Note that the figure of 300 units of housing was based on an assumed 50 units per acre on a six-acre parcel. Subsequently to submitting the proposal, it was discovered that the parcel is closer to four developable acres. It will be left to the public process to determine the recommended number of units.)

# Typical Land Development Process

- **Developer acquires title to land, creates architectural drawings, siting, parking, etc.**
- **Developer presents drafts to Planning, Zoning for approval**
- **If there is a need for an Environmental Impact Review, the public is formally given notice and invited to comment**
- **Project might be modified if comments impinge on environmental regulations**
- **Permits issued and construction begins**

(The typical land development process leaves little formal room for public participation. This is to be contrasted with the public involvement process proposed by the SoBa Partnership for the Ashby BART site and detailed in the four slides below.)

# Proposed SoBa Community Process

## 1. Input on Scope of Project and Designation of Developer(s)

- **Representative Task Force named to guide and organize public input meetings**
- **Community defines the scope of potential development and desired qualifications of developer(s)**
- **Process is staffed by SBNDC**
- **Task Force reports findings to City Council (time #1), which can decide to issue an RFQ based on them**
- **City Council issues RFQ (#2)**

## Proposed SoBa Community Process

### 2. Community input on selection of developer(s)

- **Developers, both for-profit and non-profit, respond to RFQ**
- **Task Force convenes community to assess the responses**
- **Task Force reports findings to City Council**
- **City Council (#3) selects developer(s) and enters into an Exclusive Negotiating Agreement for 12-18 months**

## Proposed SoBa Community Process

### 3. Design process: buildings, streets, open spaces

- (Task Force?) organizes community participation meetings with developer(s), utilizing professional facilitators, and consultants hired by the community in architecture, urban design, environmental building, financial analysis, etc., over a 12-month period
- **Community members, with developer(s) present proposed project (#4) to City Council**



# Proposed SoBa Community Process

## 4. “Typical Land Development Process” starts

**Assuming no remaining issues:**

- **Developer acquires title to land, creates architectural drawings, siting, parking, etc.**
- **Submission to Planning Commission, Zoning Adjustments Board, etc.**
- **Goes (#5) to City Council for approval**
- **If required, public is notified about EIR**
- **If required, goes back (#6) to City Council for approval**
- **Permits issued and construction begins**

## Typical Land Development Process

Developer acquires title to land, creates architectural drawings, siting, parking, etc.

Developer presents drafts to Planning, Zoning for approval

If there is a need for an Environmental Impact Review, the public is formally given notice and invited to comment

Project might be modified if comments impinge on environmental regulations

Permits issued and construction begins

## Proposed SoBa Community Process

### Input on Scope of Project and Designation of Developer(s)

Representative Task Force named to guide and organize public input meetings  
Community defines the scope of potential development and desired qualifications of developer(s)

Process is staffed by SBNDP

Task Force reports findings to City Council (time #1), which can decide to issue an RFQ based on them

City Council issues RFQ (#2)

### Community input on selection of developer(s)

Developers, both for-profit and non-profit, respond to RFQ

Task Force convenes community to assess the responses

Task Force reports findings to City Council

City Council (#3) selects developer(s) and enters into an Exclusive Negotiating Agreement for 12-18 months

### Design process: buildings, streets, open spaces

(Task Force?) organizes community participation meetings with developer(s), utilizing professional facilitators, and consultants hired by the community in architecture, urban design, environmental building, financial analysis, etc., over a 12-month period

Community members, developer(s) present proposed project (#4) to City Council

### “Typical Land Development Process” starts

Assuming no remaining issues:

Developer acquires title to land, creates architectural drawings, siting, parking, etc.  
Submission to Planning Commission, ZAB, etc.

Goes (#5) to City Council for approval

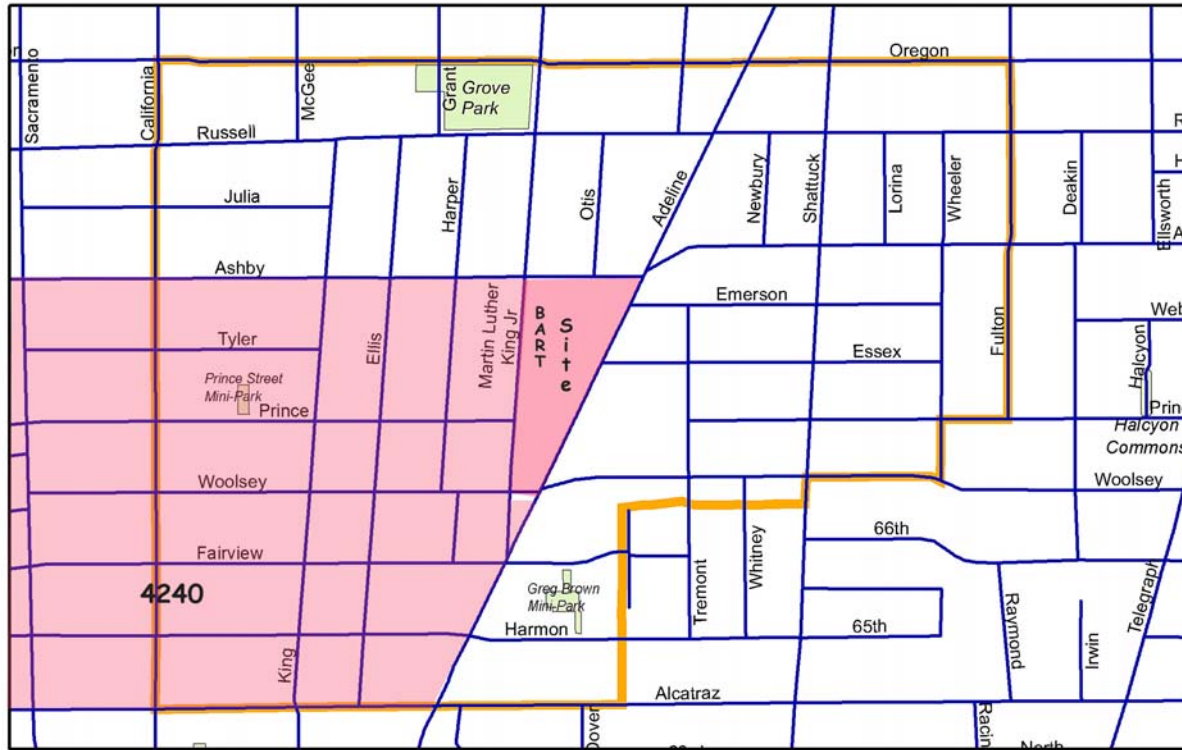
If required, public is notified about EIR

If required, goes back (#6) to City Council for approval

Permits issued and construction begins

(This slide summarizes the previous 5 slides, graphically depicting the elaborate public involvement process proposed for SoBa vs. a more typical development process.)

# Proposed Project Area



Project Area bounded in Gold

(This Proposed Project Area was part of the Caltrans grant proposal. The Project Area is the City of Berkeley blocks which are approximately ½ mile around the BART Site, a distance chosen to correspond to BART Station Area planning standards. The purpose of creating a Project Area is to be able to measure the impact of proposed development in a reasonable space around it. The BART Site is shaded, as is Census Tract 4240, where much of the impact would occur. Especially because of anticipated revitalization of the Adeline Corridor and creation of job opportunities due to the development, impacts in this low-income Census Tract were chosen for inclusion in the proposal.)

# South Berkeley Neighborhood Development Corporation



Rosewood Manor - 1615 Russell Street



Lorin Station Plaza – 3253 Adeline Street

**Founded in 1987 as part of the South Berkeley Area planning process**  
**Owners of Rosewood Manor and Lorin Station Plaza low-income housing**  
**Programs in neighborhood beautification, business development, youth**  
**mentorship, etc.**

**SoBa Role: fiscal sponsor, staffing, convening, consultant oversight**

(The South Berkeley Neighborhood Development Corporation would act as a community partner with the City. This slide shows some information about SBNDP.)