

How Redevelopment in South Berkeley is Impacting a Long-Term Community Market



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Disclaimer

This study has been prepared for Alisa Shen, City Planner, City of Berkeley, CA. The author conducted this study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Public Policy at Mills College. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Mills College Public Policy Program, the sponsoring organization, or any other agency.

Executive Summary

The City of Berkeley received a \$750,000 planning grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in 2014 to look at possible improvements for the Adeline Corridor/South Shattuck area of South Berkeley, which consists of Adeline from Ward Street to the Oakland border and a small section of South Shattuck from Dwight Way to Ward Street (<http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/AdelineCorridor/>). The planning department will be considering community goals, reducing traffic congestion, housing and economic development, as well as historic and arts preservation. The project includes a major three-year outreach plan, whereby community members get to be a part of the planning process and express what they would like to see in their neighborhood. Part of the outreach plan includes a survey of the vendors at the Ashby Flea Market, which operates at the Ashby BART station parking lot on Adeline Street every Saturday and Sunday. I conducted the survey over a two-month period, with questions centered around the vendors' wants and needs, as well as what they envisioned for their future and ideas for possible relocation.

There were many questions about what they thought the market could improve on, and I found the vendors to be very vocal about the issues they felt were important, such as better bathrooms, more organization, and more dedication from staff in helping to increase the market's visibility and overall business. The results of the survey demonstrate that a majority of vendors, particularly long-term vendors (15+ years), do not want to move from the parking lot and cannot imagine the market being anywhere else. A few had ideas for other possible venues, but the idea of relocation in general seemed to evoke fear and frustration, based on my conversations with them. While only 34.15% of vendors said selling at the market was their primary living, 63.41% identified the flea market as an important source of second income that helped them to make ends meet.

This report examines the results of the flea market vendor survey, as well as analyzing all stakeholders involved, including flea market staff and board members, community

members, and city employees. It also will look at past redevelopment plans for South Berkeley, in addition to the role of public markets in communities and transit-oriented development. The results of the flea market vendor survey, along with the interviews I conducted and my own research assisted me in constructing four alternatives based on specific criteria. The alternatives include (1) keeping the market where it is (status quo) (2) moving the market to another location within the same neighborhood (3) moving the market to another location in a different neighborhood (4) closing the market. The criteria the alternatives were based on are **political** and **economic** feasibility – will there be sufficient support from the community, and what kinds of costs are involved, **equity** – what will be most equitable for the vendors in ensuring the market's continued survival, **cultural significance** – the symbolism of the market and what it represents for the community, and the **best use of the parking lot** – what is the most constructive use of the parking lot for all stakeholders.

Given that affordable housing is the primary concern for the Adeline Corridor community based on survey results collected from the City as part of the outreach plan, I concluded the parking lot could be utilized in a more efficient and beneficial way. I also have concluded the parking lot disrupts the neighborhood, and if part of it were removed, there could be walk/bike paths put in, more green space, and a reconnection of the neighborhood, as well as possibilities for more housing. Through the interviews I conducted with community members, board members, and flea market staff, the market is significant to the Adeline Corridor community, as they consider it a cultural icon, so ensuring its continued success is a vital part of the plan.

While board and community members seem open to the market relocating, there is strong emotion about where it will go and having it remain within the neighborhood. Therefore, my recommendation is to relocate the flea market from the parking lot out onto Adeline Street, where the street will be blocked off for the flea market on the weekends between Ashby Street and Russell. Additionally, I recommend the flea market staff and board members, along with the City, use the opportunity to revitalize the market through improvements and more publicity. According to vendors and staff,

business has steadily been declining over the last five years. There are varying theories about this, such as certain long-term vendors leaving or passing away, lack of sufficient advertising or marketing, changing demographics of the neighborhood, and problems with loiterers, given that Ashby Flea Market is an open market. A new location could improve the look and feel of the market and attract new vendors, as well as customers.

This alternative ranks highest, in terms of meeting all criteria and stakeholders' needs, as well as opening up possibilities of a better neighborhood design and a more constructive use of the Ashby BART station parking lot. The lot can then be used for mixed-use development with a focus on affordable housing. The City will work in partnership with the Adeline Corridor community to decide what would best support and nourish the neighborhood and protect the culture and history, as well as the Ashby Flea Market.