

CITY COUNCILMEMBER  
**RIGEL ROBINSON**  
 DISTRICT 7

CONSENT CALENDAR  
 October 26, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
 From: Councilmember Robinson (Author) and Mayor Arreguin (Co-Sponsor)  
 Subject: Budget Referral: Durant Parklet and Telegraph Plaza Improvements

RECOMMENDATION

Refer \$60,000 to the November 2021 AAO process for placemaking improvements in the Telegraph District, consisting of the installation of a public parklet on Durant Avenue and the closure of the right-turn slip lane at the Dwight Triangle to create a public plaza.

BACKGROUND

***Durant Parklet***

Durant Avenue on Southside is a hotspot for UC Berkeley students, home to many restaurants, take-out spots, and bars, including those in Durant Food Court. On weekend nights, students can be seen eating while standing on the sidewalk, as there is not enough seating in the food court or the parklet in front of Artichoke's to accommodate demand. This budget referral proposes the installation of a second public parklet in front of Durant Food Court, which would not only be highly utilized, but also revitalize the business district and assist in traffic calming. The parklet could house additional lighting and be designed to facilitate activities such as live music and small retail opportunities.

Durant is a one-way street with two travel lanes and two lanes of street parking. With the current street configuration, gig drivers working for Doordash or UberEats often decide to park in a travel lane to run inside and pick up orders. The congestion has been exacerbated by the pandemic because of the increase in take-out orders. Durant is a major bus corridor servicing many lines including the 51B, 79, 36, and 6, and the car traffic and illegal parking can cause serious delays in bus service.

In May 2021, AC Transit accepted an ACTC grant to install a quick-build bus lane on Durant Avenue and address the above concerns.<sup>1</sup> As that project begins to take shape, the timing is right for the City to consider revitalization projects such as a public parklet, so that the AC Transit planning process can take the improvements into consideration.

<sup>1</sup> <https://actransit.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9380793&GUID=0D09DB3F-6B48-427D-9627-E5F2460FC7A8>



### ***Dwight Triangle/Telegraph Plaza***

The traffic median on the intersection of Telegraph and Dwight, known as the Dwight Triangle, has long been a target for much-needed improvements. The 2016 Telegraph Public Realm Plan<sup>2</sup> lays out a vision for the Triangle that includes landscaping, improved lighting, and public art. In the November 2020 AAO, the City allocated \$100,000 to begin rehabilitating the Triangle, adding planter areas in partnership with the Telegraph Business Improvement District.

Currently, the pedestrian crossing is unsafe as the slip lane creates opportunities for conflict with drivers turning right onto Telegraph without slowing down. Slip lanes exist to allow drivers to take faster turns, often at the expense of pedestrian safety. In recognition of the impact of street design on road safety and collision rates, cities across the country are moving to replace dangerous slip lanes with pedestrian and bike infrastructure.<sup>3</sup>

The crosswalks around the Triangle can also be uninviting and confusing, which contributes to a tangible disconnect between the first four blocks of Telegraph and the southern part of the district. This proposal, supported by the TBID, would reactivate the space by using planters or bollards to close off the slip lane, creating a public plaza with seating and other amenities where people can eat, interact, and enjoy a day on Telegraph. Furthermore, the TBID and City staff can implement best practices, including those learned from the newly-renovated BART plaza in Downtown Berkeley, to create an inviting space with new programming and entertainment options for visitors of the Telegraph area and members of the Telegraph community.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.berkeleyside.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Telegraph-Public-Realm-Plan-Final-Low-Res.pdf> (page 26)

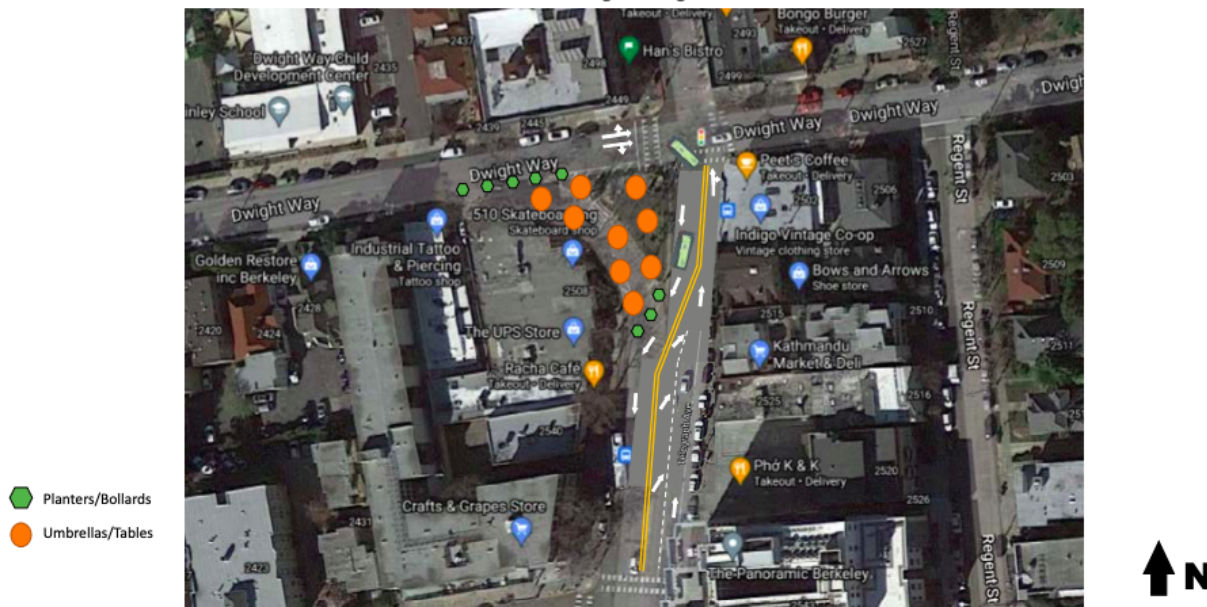
<sup>3</sup> <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2018/07/13/cities-are-replacing-dangerous-slip-lanes-with-space-for-people/>

As this demonstration project moves forward, collaboration will continue between the TBID, the City of Berkeley, and AC Transit to determine the best way to accommodate the 6 bus route, which uses the slip lane to turn right from Durant onto Telegraph. One potential solution being explored is to restripe a portion of Telegraph south of Dwight to allow larger vehicles, such as fire trucks and buses, to make sufficiently wide turns.

“Telegraph Plaza” at Dwight Triangle concept

### “Telegraph Plaza” concept v2

at the Dwight Triangle



#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Approximately \$40,000 for a parklet and \$20,000 for enlarging and paint stripes around the Triangle, for a total of \$60,000.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

None.

#### CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Rigel Robinson, (510) 981-7170  
Angie Chen, Legislative Aide

#### Attachments:

- 1: TBID Support Letter



**Telegraph Business Improvement District**

2437 Durant Avenue #206, Berkeley, CA 94704

510-486-2366

[alex@telegraphberkeley.org](mailto:alex@telegraphberkeley.org)

July 23, 2021

Farid Javandel

Public Works Department

City of Berkeley

**Re: Requested review of the “Telegraph Plaza” proposal**

Mr. Javandel,

I am writing to present you with a proposed vision for the area known as the Dwight Triangle and to request your department’s partnership in reviewing the proposal’s feasibility. As you will see from the description below, a key factor in determining the feasibility involves testing a reconfiguration of the intersection to redirect the path of travel for vehicles while maintaining the existing circulation plan.

At their May 11, 2021 meeting the Telegraph Business Improvement District Board of Directors voted unanimously to move forward with exploring a new, safer vision for the Dwight Triangle median at Telegraph Ave. and Dwight Way. The “Telegraph Plaza” vision aims to establish a vibrant and inviting public space that enhances pedestrian safety and supports a variety of beneficial uses. Achieving the vision necessitates the complete closure of the existing right turn slip-lane to essentially conjoin the sidewalk with the Triangle. (see attachment)

We recognize that the slip-lane is an important path of travel for vehicles including busses, emergency vehicles, and other commercial traffic. There are also numerous examples from around the country where similar modifications to traffic patterns have improved both safety and economic development. With that in mind we feel that a variety of options should be explored to achieve this vision.

The TBID is specifically requesting that the City conduct an actual turn-radius test to determine how an alternative right-turn would be configured. This test would include different north bound travel lane configurations including using the existing bus stop lane (which is slated for removal) as a north bound travel lane. This would allow more space for a large vehicle to make the right turn from Dwight Way on to Telegraph Ave. The TBID is eager to help facilitate the test with the participation of the various public agency partners that need to be involved.

Our goal with conducting a turn-radius test is to determine the viability of closing the slip-turn and reconfiguring the Dwight/Telegraph intersection. If the outcome of the test supports this proposal, we would then take steps to implement a short-term trial of the “Telegraph Plaza” vision as a demonstration project. As part of your review of this proposal we respectfully request consideration of any other alternatives that would facilitate the closure of the slip-turn lane.



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This request is also being made with consideration of the current transportation planning initiatives that are underway including the Southside Complete Streets and AC Transit Rapid Corridors projects. We understand that the north bound bus stop at Dwight & Telegraph is proposed to be moved and there are other plans in motion which present a timely opportunity to consider a new vision for this important public space.

The TBID has identified the Dwight Triangle as a top public realm investment priority with exceptional potential to advance our economic development and place-making goals for the District. The TBID feels strongly that the “Telegraph Plaza” vision should be given serious consideration as part of the City’s transportation planning and capital improvement projects. We are pleased to have Councilmember Robinson’s support for the vision, which is also part of implementing the Telegraph Public Realm Plan and advances the Vision Zero traffic safety policy. Overall, the vision seeks to achieve the highest and best use of what is arguably our district’s most under-utilized public infrastructure resource.

I am prepared to assist as needed with conducting the review and test including coordination with district stakeholders and any additional support our organization can provide. We sincerely appreciate your attention to this matter and are excited to work with the City on advancing important public realm improvements.

In partnership,

Alex Knox  
Executive Director  
Telegraph Business Improvement District

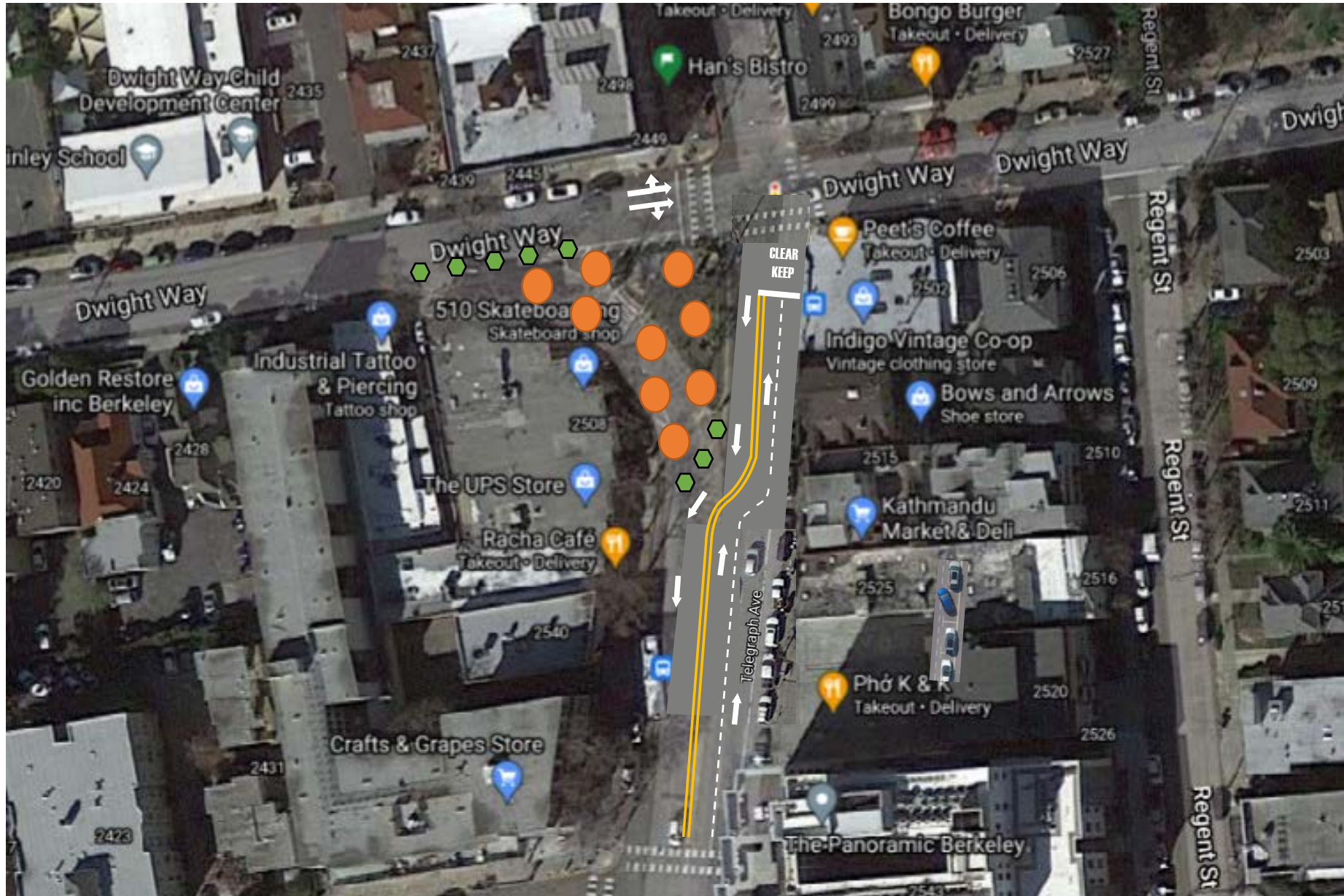
CC:

Councilmember Rigel Robinson, David White – Deputy City Manager, Liam Garland – Public Works Director, Ryan Lau – AC Transit External Affairs, Shallon Allen – Special Events Coordinator, Office of Economic Development

Attachment: “Telegraph Plaza” conceptual design

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"Telegraph Plaza" concept

at the Dwight Triangle



- Planters/Bollards
- Umbrellas/Tables

