

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING
COMMISSION
MAY 10, 2000**

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Place: Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda
The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Commissioners present: Boverhuis (7:25 p.m.), Bronstein, Capitelli, Howerton, McCamant (7:10 p.m.), Poschman, Wengraf, Wrenn

Commissioner Absent: Morris

Staff present: Haney-Owens, Mottern, Thomas, Wendover

PUBLIC COMMENT

John English stated that he is concerned about the agenda for the June 14, 2000 special meeting of the Planning Commission. He stated that an agenda that includes a General Plan discussion of urban design, historic preservation, and community safety issues is too lengthy, and that safety concerns will receive too little attention. He also stated his preference for a working group approach for the General Plan Process.

GENERAL PLAN LAND USE WORKSHOP

Commissioner Wrenn stated that comments on the General Plan or the Land Use Element should be submitted in the next ten days, to allow sufficient time for review by the Commissioners before they begin revising the Land Use Element of the General Plan.

LAND USE AND THE CHARACTER OF BERKELEY

Aaron Priven stated that land use planning has tended to be a strictly local function, and that unfortunately, there is no real regional planning in this area. He stated that each city must be responsible for its impacts on the region.

Carrie Sprague stated that she lives in Central Berkeley and she is disappointed that Central Berkeley and Downtown Berkeley are not identified on the map in the handout for this workshop.

Dave Blake stated that the University, its events, and its atmosphere add to the City of Berkeley.

Nancy Carleton stated that she appreciates the diversity of Berkeley, ethnically, economically, and in regards to sexual orientation. She stated her belief that the loss of rent control and a tight real estate market are threatening to eliminate the economic diversity. She also stated her concern for the livability and character of Berkeley's neighborhoods.

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1 Nancy Holland stated that she is interested in preserving diversity and that she appreciates that
2 Berkeley can support both the University and quiet residential neighborhoods.

3
4 Jason Meggs stated that the worst thing about Berkeley is its motor traffic and urged
5 Commissioners to read a book called *Carfree Cities*.

6
7 Susan Cerny stated that the built environment of Berkeley is special because of its historic
8 significance. She stated that the University is what attracts so many people to Berkeley. She
9 states that many major streets, including University Avenue and San Pablo Avenue, are
10 unhealthy and polluted and that the City ought to bring amenities to the residents of these streets.

11
12 Richard Register stated that density in conjunction with transit works well. He also stated his
13 support for creek restoration projects.

14
15 Robert Cabrera of the Berkeley Property Owner's Association stated his support for preserving
16 Berkeley's positive, historic qualities, as reflected in the recently published book, *Berkeley 1900*.

17
18 Peggy Schioler of the Berkeley Property Owner's Association stated that she came to the
19 University over 50 years ago and fell in love with Berkeley. She stated that the City has changed
20 a lot over the last 50 years, and that she does not believe that saving trees and historic property is
21 more important than accommodating growth. She stated her desire to see more housing
22 developed along the corridors and in West Berkeley.

23
24 Commissioner McCamant stated that sometimes goals do conflict. She stated her desire for
25 workshop participants to be creative in coming up with solutions, with the knowledge that
26 change must happen.

27
28 John McBride stated that people are only concerned about new buildings because so many of
29 them are poorly designed. He stated his concern that San Pablo and University Avenues not be
30 treated as dumping grounds for the City. He also stated that population density does not justify
31 ugly buildings.

32
33 Norine Smith stated that she lives at the Rose Garden and that the biggest asset to Berkeley is its
34 people. She stated that the walkability of the City is nice and that high-rise development does not
35 enhance the pedestrian experience.

36
37 Henry Ongreth stated that the City should set a population cap.

38 Commissioner Wengraf asked at what population should that cap should be set.

39 Henry Ongreth stated that he is unsure, but that the City should not just accept the
40 recommendation of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). He stated that if he had
41 to set a number, he would set it at today's population (109,000).

42
43 Becky O'Malley stated her desire to focus on the City as a whole. She stated her concern that
44 discussion tends to fragment along neighborhood association lines. She stated her desire to return
45 to the sensibilities of planning during the streetcar suburb era. She also stated that tearing down
46 older housing threatens diversity in the area.

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DOWNTOWN

Martha Nicoloff stated her support for legislation that would require voter approval of an increase in height limits. She stated that maintaining current height limit levels would give the city a chance to deal with the influx of students and the threat of the Hayward Fault. She also stated that students prefer to live in low-rise housing.

Michael Katz stated that the General Plan should defer to the Downtown Plan by encouraging density along corridors. He stated his concern that delays in the permit office are a hindrance. He stated his concern for the campaign to end rent stabilization.

Nancy Carleton of the Zoning Adjustments Board stated that there are a lot of permits being processed to increase density, even under the existing zoning code. She stated that the only types of development bonuses she supports are those for housing affordability. She stated that parking mitigation fees should be used to pay for transit.

Commissioner Wengraf stated that increased density is not always safe. She stated her concern about extra units being added in the Northeast Berkeley Hills near the Hayward Fault.

Janet Stromberg stated that prioritizing General Plan issues is more important than creating a wish list.

Commissioner Bronstein stated that the Commission is trying to get a sense of public opinion on issues while they work on the General Plan.

Eva Bansner stated that the staff draft General Plan assumes increased density, high-rise development, and housing development. She stated that she believes the General Plan may result in changes to the previously adopted Downtown Plan.

Deborah Badhia of the Downtown Berkeley Association (DBA) stated that the DBA supports increased density because it would help retail and transit. She stated that grocery stores in Downtown would be ideal. She stated that the City should encourage a conference center Downtown because there is a need for meeting space. She also stated that the City should consider a plan for the Oxford area.

Sally Sachs of the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association stated that the Downtown and West Berkeley Plans should be incorporated into the General Plan and that the General Plan must ensure citizen control of the planning process.

Commissioner McCamant stated there are more people who want to live in Berkeley, as well as more jobs locating in Berkeley. She asked the workshop participants to evaluate how we should plan for these realities.

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1 Commissioner Capitelli stated that Berkeley has an affordable housing crisis. He stated that the
2 goals of speeding the development process and maintaining a high level of citizen review could
3 be seen as conflicting.
4

5 Commissioner Wrenn stated that the reason increased density discussions focus on Downtown is
6 because transit is readily available in that area of the City. He stated that one problem that results
7 from increasing the population is increasing the number of cars. He stated that if the City adds
8 new housing Downtown, it could attract residents without cars.
9

10 Richard Register stated that cars damage our environment. He stated that a diversity of
11 architectural styles would best suit Berkeley.
12

13 Pat Devaney stated that mostly students, rather than working people, demand affordable housing.
14 He stated that population growth can be accommodated in the existing zoning envelope.
15

16 Dave Blake, formerly of the Zoning Adjustments Board, stated that there is no grocery store in
17 Downtown. He stated his desire to create a plan that turns Downtown into a place where people
18 want to live.
19

20 Tim Hanson stated that the City should not be allowed to eliminate the citizen review process.
21

22 Norine Smith stated that Downtown is already dense. She stated her support for moving
23 additional units to other areas of the City.
24

25 Ed Bennett stated that tall buildings are not the solution for building affordable housing, because
26 the building costs of tall buildings are so great.
27

28 Commissioner Bronstein stated that one important question is whom we want to serve by
29 creating affordable housing. She asked if we want Downtown to become an annex to the
30 University.
31

32 Dave Blake stated that students, who do not demand grocery stores, caused the lack of grocery
33 stores in Downtown.
34

35 Nancy Carleton stated her opposition to increased height limits. She stated her support for using
36 mitigation funds for car-free housing for transit, bicycle boulevard improvements, and open
37 space. She also stated her support for daylighting creeks.
38

39 Nancy Holland stated that she does not see the need for creating more office space in Downtown.
40

41 John Norheim stated that there is no available office space in Downtown.
42

43 Richard Register stated that students do not need a lot of space in their housing units.
44

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1 Robert Cabrera of the Berkeley Property Owner's Association stated that the City seems to
2 oppose apartment buildings and apartment owners. He stated that it is inevitable to consider
3 putting more apartments in the Downtown.
4

5 Peggy Schioler stated that Berkeley has a rental housing crisis because of rent control and the
6 need to accommodate additional people.
7

8 Becky O'Malley stated that the idea of car-free housing does not stipulate that the solution is tall
9 buildings. She stated her desire to see a working group form to discuss these problems.
10

11 John DeClerq stated that his vision for the City is that of a socially conscious city that keeps
12 things where they belong: density and a conference center in the Downtown. He stated his
13 support for the idea of a population cap.
14

15 Michael Katz stated that he hoped the planning process will not forever be dependent on the
16 single Downtown BART station when deciding where to locate new density. He stated his
17 support for reserving part of Downtown for tax-paying office development.
18

19 Andy Katz of the Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC) stated that
20 students will live in nearly any size apartment. He stated his concern for the fact that not all
21 students can afford to live in Berkeley. He also stated that, in a recent survey, 88% of students
22 said they would be willing to live without a car.
23

24
25 **WEST BERKELEY**
26

27 Sally Sachs stated that she is concerned with toxics.

28 Commissioner Poschman stated that toxics will be discussed in the Public Safety element of the
29 General Plan.
30

31 Shunji Suzuki stated that he has a family and lives in West Berkeley, but that he can no longer
32 afford his housing and has to move. He stated that West Berkeley could become a transit hub,
33 but eyesores like the Amtrak station hold it back.
34

35 John English stated that businesses should locate closer to Downtown.
36

37 Susan Libby of the West Berkeley Association of Industrial Companies stated that there are a
38 wide variety of businesses in West Berkeley. She stated her support for developing live/work
39 units in appropriate situations, but that the category cannot be used to evade requirements for
40 parking.
41

42 Janet Stromberg stated that West Berkeley is an appropriate place for developing housing that is
43 affordable to families. Downtown is acceptable for singles and students, but not for families. She
44 stated her support for exploring the option of seeking employer subsidies for family housing.
45

46 Mike O'Malley stated his support for the West Berkeley art and theatre communities.

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2 Nancy Carleton stated her support for the West Berkeley Plan because it allows a balance of
3 economic uses. She stated that a developer recently told her that Berkeley was losing out to
4 development in Emeryville, and she stated that this is not her vision of Berkeley.

5
6 Mike Issell of the Zoning Adjustments Board stated that the City should weight competing
7 values numerically and develop a formula to balance opposing interests. He stated that his
8 objective approach would improve the system.

9
10 Dave Blake stated that even live/work units are very expensive housing options.

11
12 Eva Bansner stated that transportation needs to be examined more closely, especially the idea of
13 a ferry terminal. She stated her support for a hotel in West Berkeley.

14
15 Don Yost stated that the lots along San Pablo near 51st are being sold and developed as housing.
16 He also stated that since few people actually work in live/work units, the term "live/work" is not
17 entirely accurate and therefore should not be used.

18
19 Patrick Kennedy stated that San Pablo could be a major transit corridor, and pointed to
20 ACTransit's new green buses along San Pablo Avenue as an example. He stated that there are
21 25,000 jobs being created in Emeryville, within walking distance of Berkeley's San Pablo
22 Avenue. He also stated that Berkeley should embrace the new, dot-com economy in its
23 Downtown.

24
25 John McBride stated that San Pablo Avenue is connected to the region because Berkeley receives
26 a great deal of traffic from San Pablo Avenue. He stated that some people call for light rail
27 service along San Pablo Avenue.

28
29 Norine Smith stated that dot-commers need cars because they work irregular, often late hours
30 and therefore cannot depend on transit, which ends service early.

31
32 John Norheim stated that the City should prepare for development along the San Pablo corridor
33 and in West Berkeley.

34
35 Don Yost stated that the land value along San Pablo Avenue between Ashby Avenue and
36 Delaware Street has doubled. He stated that land from the Santa Fe Railroad Right-of-Way is
37 also very valuable.

38
39
40 UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

41
42 Martha Nicoloff stated that the lack of rent control creates a problem for drawing students to live
43 Downtown because they have less available expendable income to patronize Downtown
44 businesses. She stated her support for a policy that would expel students from the University if
45 they were found to have cars when they are enjoined from doing so.

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1 Nancy Carleton stated that the General Plan should take a stand on UC Berkeley enrollment. She
2 also stated her support for more housing near campus.

3
4 Sharon stated that 30% of the land in Berkeley is owned or leased by the University, and the
5 taxpayers bear the brunt of it because UC is not subject to land use controls and does not
6 contribute taxes. She stated that the City should seek compensation from the State Legislature
7 and seek to acquire properties owned or leased by the University.

8
9 John English stated that the General Plan ought to consider taking a position on not only UC
10 Berkeley enrollment, but also on enrollment in extension programs and employment at the
11 University. He asked about the best future use of the State Health Services lot. He stated that the
12 University's New Century Plan should be addressed in the General Plan.

13
14 Dave Blake stated that students can no longer afford to live in Berkeley. He stated that the
15 University ought to see a benefit in developing affordable housing. He stated his concern for the
16 University's developments of Downtown properties, which ruin pedestrian uses.

17
18 Staff Thomas stated that 70% of UC students live in Berkeley, and that figure has held constant
19 over a long period of time.

20
21 Commissioner Capitelli asked if it was bad that students live Downtown.

22 Dave Blake stated that they draw fast food establishments and movie theaters.

23 Commissioner Wengraf stated that older people are afraid to go Downtown.

24
25 John McBride stated that the Southside Plan has identified opportunity sites for developing
26 housing in the Southside and that the General Plan should follow that idea for the rest of
27 Berkeley. He stated that the General Plan should indicate the City's vision.

28
29 Primo Facchini stated that in 1942, there was a vibrant community along Telegraph, but the
30 University has gotten much larger and take over the area since then.

31
32 Carrie Olson stated that the General Plan should have a policy opposing further leasing of
33 property by the University. She also stated her support for an examination of whether the
34 University builds within the permitted zoning envelope.

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37 **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

38
39 No report was given.

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42 **COUNCIL REPORT**

43
44 Staff Haney-Owens stated that the City Council has referred the Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety
45 Report recommendations to the budget process.

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FUTURE AGENDAS

Commissioner McCamant requested a date in June or July for a presentation to the Commission on the outcome of the Southside Plan Public Safety Working Group. The Commission selected the meeting of June 28, 2000.

Commissioner Wengraf asked about the possibility of holding a separate General Plan Workshop on the subject of Public Safety, instead of combining it with the discussions of Urban Design and Historic Preservation at the June 14, 2000 workshop. She stated her concern for the lack of disaster plans for the City and the School District.

Staff Thomas stated that the Public Safety element of the General Plan has been significantly reworked and has been sent to the Fire Safety Council, the Disaster Council, and the Seismic Technical Advisory Group. These bodies plan to submit comments to the June 14, 2000 General Plan Workshop.

Commissioner Bronstein stated her support for proceeding with the current agenda and planning to cover Urban Design, Historic Preservation, and Public Safety at the June 14, 2000 Planning Commission meeting. She stated that if Commissioners feel there is insufficient time to discuss Public Safety at that workshop, they could schedule an additional workshop at that point. The Commission agreed to this approach.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM APRIL 12, 2000 MEETING

(M/S/C) to adopt the minutes from the April 12, 2000 meeting without changes (Poschman/Capitelli). The motion carried. Ayes: Boverhuis, Bronstein, Capitelli, Howerton, McCamant, Poschman, Wengraf, Wrenn. Noes: None. Abstentions: None. Absent: Morris.

AVENUES PLAN COMPONENT OF THE INCLUSIONARY HOUSING ORDINANCE

Commissioner Poschman stated that he agrees with the staff and the Housing Advisory Commission's recommendations that this ordinance be allowed to expire because it is difficult to interpret and because it has had little effect on the development of housing in Berkeley.

(M/S/C) to adopt the staff and Housing Advisory Commission recommendations and allow the Avenue Plan Component of the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance to expire on July 1, 2000 (Capitelli/Poschman). The motion carried. Ayes: Boverhuis, Bronstein, Capitelli, Howerton, McCamant, Poschman, Wengraf, Wrenn. Noes: None. Abstentions: None. Absent: Morris.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no committee reports.

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1 **ADJOURNMENT**

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3 The meeting is adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

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