

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING
COMMISSION AND LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION**
JUNE 14, 2000

1
2 The meeting was called to order at 7:11 p.m.

3
4

5 **1. ROLL CALL**

6

7 Planning Commissioners present: Boverhuis (7:31 p.m.), Bronstein, Capitelli, McCamant,
8 Morris (7:19 p.m.), Pappas, Poschman, and Wengraf. Nick Pappas will sit in for Commissioner
9 Wrenn at this meeting and at the meeting of June 28, 2000. Zelda Bronstein will chair the
10 meeting.

11

12 Planning Commissioner absent: Howerton.

13

14 Landmarks Preservation Commissioners present: Emmington, Korte, Morse, O'Malley and
15 Olson.

16

17 Landmarks Preservation Commissioners absent: Dishnica, Edwards, Eichenfield, and Kehlmann.

18

19 Staff present: Chakos, Cowan, Haney-Owens, Kahn, Mottern, Powell, Thomas, and Wendover.

20

21

22 **2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

23

24 Polly Armstrong of the City Council stated her appreciation of the Planning Commission holding
25 workshops in the various neighborhoods of the City.

26

27 Norine Smith suggested that the Planning Commission explore the option of a pedestrian-only
28 promenade like the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica.

29 Commissioner Poschman stated that the cities of Sacramento and Chicago tried pedestrian
30 promenades and found that they didn't work.

31 Commissioner Bronstein suggested discussing the issue at another meeting.

32

33

34 **3. ORDER OF AGENDA**

35

36 There were no changes to the order of agenda.

37

38

39 **4. GENERAL PLAN URBAN DESIGN, HISTORIC PRESERVATION, AND**
40 **COMMUNITY SAFETY WORKSHOP**

41

42 Commissioner Bronstein opened the workshop, thanking members of the public for their active
43 participation in the General Plan process.

44

45 Michael Katz asked what the last date for public comment on the draft General Plan will be.

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1 Andrew Thomas stated that public comment would be accepted at any point in the process.

2 Janet Stromberg stated her support for putting the General Plan comments on the web.

3

4

5 **URBAN DESIGN**

6

7 Commissioner O'Malley stated that she does not like the division between historic preservation
8 and urban design. She stated that in a built-out city like Berkeley, everything is a historic
9 resource. She stated her disapproval for the Design Review Committee/Landmarks Preservation
10 Commission division because modernists review new buildings and anti-modernists review old
11 buildings.

12

13 Commissioner Emmington stated that the value of historical resources depend on their
14 neighborhood context.

15

16 John McBride urged the Commissions to see the value in seemingly unplanned neighborhoods
17 like West Berkeley.

18

19 Michael Katz stated that one of Berkeley's assets is its heritage as a streetcar suburb.

20

21 Commissioner Morse stated his support for a category of neighborhood with standards that are
22 easier to meet than the strict standards for defining a neighborhood as a historic district, which
23 requires a 50% approval of landowners.

24

25 Janet Carleton stated her appreciation for Berkeley's natural setting between the bay and the hills.
26 She also stated that most parts of San Francisco are only four stories tall.

27

28 Wendy Market stated her concern for the new developments at the Claremont Hotel. She stated
29 that they will impact Berkeley traffic.

30

31 Vivian Kahn stated that the project probably requires a discretionary permit from the City of
32 Oakland, which means that Oakland will require an environmental review for the project and that
33 Berkeley residents will have an opportunity to voice their opinions to Oakland lawmakers during
34 that process.

34

35 Commissioner Emmington stated that people need to do research on the Claremont Hotel in
36 order to prove that it has historic value that will be diminished by the new development.

37

38 Clifford Fred stated that two of Berkeley's assets are its relative lack of high-rises and that its old
39 neighborhoods are still intact.

40

41 Helen Barber stated that the heaviest impacts of the Claremont Hotel development will be on the
42 streets.

43

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- 1 Commissioner Morris stated that the City should look for ways to communicate with other
2 entities like the City of Oakland. She stated that the Claremont Hotel is just one example of a
3 project that is controlled by another entity but directly affects Berkeley residents.
4 Commissioner Wengraf suggested that the Landmarks Preservation commission place the
5 Claremont Hotel development on their agenda.
6
- 7 Norine Smith stated that one of Berkeley's assets is its pedestrian friendliness in trees, sunlit
8 sidewalks, and architecture.
9
- 10 Carrie Sprague stated that residential neighborhoods are threatened by expanded parking
11 requirements that cause property owners to cover play areas for children and green space.
12
- 13 Russell Kilday-Hicks of the San Pablo Neighborhood Association stated that his neighborhood
14 fought for an R-1 zoning district to stop cheap, boxy apartments. He stated that his neighborhood
15 is currently fighting a four-story building under development.
16
- 17 John English stated his concern for preserving the quality of yards and open space. He stated his
18 opposition for planting trees in the median of University Avenue because the trees block the
19 view to the bay.
20
- 21 Steve Finacom stated that tall fences that abut sidewalks are a problem and that hedges are
22 better.
23
- 24 John McBride stated that the continuity of landscaping in inner blocks is pleasant.
25
- 26 Commissioner Capitelli asked how to resolve the problem of cars parked on front lots.
27
- 28 Norine Smith stated that litter from unleashed dogs and traffic noise are two things that can be
29 kept out of a yard by a high hedge or fence.
30
- 31 John McBride stated that the City cannot afford to maintain all of its parks.
32
- 33 Commissioner O'Malley stated that the Gaia Building will be unattractive and that we must learn
34 how to prevent buildings like it in the future.
35
- 36 John English stated that design guidelines are too vague and that they should reflect differences
37 among areas because many buildings in the City are out of context.
38
- 39 Commissioner Wengraf stated that sometimes there is a tension between beautiful buildings and
40 affordable housing.
41
- 42 Commissioner Pappas stated that affordable housing can be nice and that there are good
43 examples.
44
- 45 Commissioner Morris stated that design guidelines should be used to encourage and inform.

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1
2 Steve Finacom stated that citizens must have confidence that decision-makers pay attention to
3 Guidelines.
4
5 Suzanne Adams stated her concern for the tendency to think about a neighborhood as a
6 fortress. She stated that it is inappropriate to define contextuality by what already exists in a
7 neighborhood.
8
9 An unidentified speaker stated that sameness should not inspire. She stated that freedom is
10 important.
11
12 Commissioner Emmington stated that we need to help neighborhoods define themselves and that
13 guidelines really do help.
14
15 Clifford Fred stated that better public notification would help the design review process.
16
17 Primo Facchini stated that something is wrong with the political nature of decisions in he City.
18 He stated that the City Council should not overturn the decision of the Design Review
19 Committee.
20
21 Commissioner Wengraf stated that some ugly buildings are allowed because they are residential
22 and do not require a Design Review.
23
24 Norine Smith stated that some subsidized buildings have good design.
25
26 Commissioner Morris stated that Frank Lloyd Wright was condemned when he first built and
27 that the City should not be overly afraid of new architectural styles. She stated that some simple,
28 modernist buildings are well landscaped.
29
30 John McBride stated that he does not support mandating styles.
31
32 Commissioner O'Malley stated that there is a difference between expressive architecture and
33 cheap and boring architecture.
34
35 Carrie Olson stated that in her recent experience as a member of the Design Review Committee
36 (DRC), she has found that DRC decisions seem to have little affect since the conditions they
37 impose are so difficult to track. She stated her perception that the DRC has little control.
38
39 Commissioner Korte of the Landmarks Preservation Committee stated that windows deserve
40 more attention because they affect the character of buildings but no building permit is required to
41 replace the windows in a historic building.
42
43 Michael Katz stated that new urbanist developers are using post-modern architectural styles now.
44 He stated his desire for Berkeley to preserve its true historical architecture.
45

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1 Janet Stromberg stated that suburbs look better than they used to and the challenge of inner-ring
2 suburbs like Berkeley is how to attract good new developments.
3

4
5 **HISTORIC PRESERVATION**
6

7 John English stated that the City should not weaken its Landmarks Preservation Ordinance. He
8 stated his support for giving the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) the power to
9 prohibit demolitions instead of just suspending them. He stated his support of declaring the
10 following areas historical districts: Downtown, Bowditch/Benvenue, and Telegraph Avenue. He
11 stated that a zoning ordinance that allowed tall building would create an incentive for
12 demolishing historic structures.
13

14 Steve Finacom stated that the public does not understand the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance.
15 He stated his support for creating a classification of historic district that is easier to obtain than
16 the current historic district status. He suggested giving tax incentives to owners of historic
17 buildings.
18

19 Commissioner Bronstein stated that there is a widespread public impression that all old buildings
20 qualify as landmarks and that local preservationists should make the criteria for landmarking a
21 building clear to the general public.
22

23 Clifford Fred stated that the City should require Environmental Impact Reports before allowing
24 demolition of historic structures. He stated his preference for zoning regulations that limit the
25 height of residential buildings to four stories, instead of the currently allowed six stories.
26

27 Michael Katz stated that a strong historic preservation program could lead to economic
28 development and ecologically sound buildings.
29

30 Commissioner O'Malley stated her support for allowing the Landmarks Preservation
31 Commission (LPC) the power to forbid demolition. She stated that a developer could always
32 appeal the LPC decision.
33

34 John English stated that he would like to rename the Landmarks Preservation Commission the
35 "Historic Resources Commission."
36

37 John McBride stated that sensitive, economically viable infill housing could work.
38

39 Commissioner Morse stated that Allston Way is a vulnerable area and that he considers it a
40 candidate for historic district. He also stated that the Landmarks Preservation Commission has no
41 clout in neighborhood discussions.
42

43 Steven Finacom stated that the Landmarks Preservation process is not antithetical to
44 development, only to unpalatable, cheap, or modern buildings.
45

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1 Commissioner Olson stated her support for historic districts. She stated that the Underhill Area
2 falls in a district where 17 out of 18 buildings are historically significant.

3
4 Trent Wilson stated his support for a city-sponsored inventory of historic buildings.

5
6 Janet Stromberg suggested developing sets of standards for each district of the city.

7
8 Norine Smith stated that Berkeley will lose its unique character if it does not protect its historic
9 landmarks.

10
11 Commissioner Emmington stated that staff tends to side with developers and that staff should be
12 aware of the importance of historic resources.

13
14 Commissioner Wengraf stated that preservationists need to publicize their cause to enlist the
15 support of more citizens.

16
17 Commissioner O'Malley stated that the Landmarks Preservation Commission is understaffed.

18
19 Steve Finacom stated that the term "landmark" implies a high standard and that perhaps the City
20 should consider a change in terminology.

21
22 Commissioner Morse stated that microfiche of the documents relating to historic buildings
23 should be made available to the public.

24 Vivian Kahn replied that all of the City's building records are available to the public, but
25 information for older buildings is often incomplete.

26
27
28 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

29
30 Russell Kilday-Hicks stated that the City would be hard-hit by a major earthquake. He stated the
31 need for creating a disaster plan and for seismic retrofitting of existing buildings.

32
33 Arietta Chakos of the City Manager's Office stated that the City is working with the Federal
34 Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and that Berkeley has been named a "Project Impact"
35 site by FEMA in order to work on reducing risks.

36
37 Commissioner Wengraf stated that the cost of insuring a building against earthquakes is often
38 less than the costs of relocating tenants during retrofitting, so landlords delay needed retrofits.

39
40 Commissioner Morris stated that many buildings on lower Sproul Plaza are seismically unsafe
41 and suffer from deferred maintenance.

42
43 Commissioner Capitelli asked what the focus of FEMA's Project Impact program was.
44

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1 Arrietta Chakos stated that Project Impact focuses on all types of natural hazards and that other
2 communities have used it for hazards besides earthquakes.

3
4 Russell Kilday-Hicks stated that the School District has not fully implemented their emergency
5 plan.

6
7 Steve Finacom stated that schools and parks will become refugee camps in the event of a major
8 disaster, so the City should investigate what services can be provided in these public spaces. He
9 also stated a need for the City to plan for what to do with land that may be leveled in case of
10 natural disaster.

11 Commissioner Poschman stated that after the 1991 Oakland Hills fire, the Zoning Adjustments
12 Board was bypassed during the rebuilding process, resulting in large increases in the size of
13 residences.

14 Commissioner Morris stated that the City could educate its citizens through neighborhood
15 associations.

16
17 Janet Stromberg stated that at her neighborhood's disaster training, the group was told that they
18 could not use schools in the case of a natural disaster.

19
20 Clifford Fred stated that a greater density makes Berkeley more vulnerable to disasters. He stated
21 his concern with the fact that there is only one emergency room left in the area.

22
23 Commissioner Wengraf stated that City staff should designate sites that could be used by the
24 public as meeting places in case of an emergency. She stated her concern that Fire Station #7 in
25 the Northeast Hills has not been seismically retrofitted. She stated that the station is outdated and
26 small. She stated that neighborhoods that complete City-sponsored fire safety training should be
27 able to get City fire hoses for use in an emergency.

28
29 Norine Smith stated that, in addition to public safety issues like fire and earthquakes, the General
30 Plan ought to address personal safety issues like muggings.

31
32 John McBride stated that residents should be able to support themselves for about 96 hours in
33 any major disaster.

34
35 Commissioner Olson stated that the City should require landlords to retrofit seismically unsound
36 buildings.

37
38 Steve Finacom stated that in the case of a natural disaster, many people who are in Berkeley will
39 not be able to get out of the City. He also stated that in previous disasters, police and fire crews
40 discouraged citizens from entering hazard areas to help. He stated that he would not support a
41 policy like this in the future.

42
43 Russell Kilday-Hicks stated that the Emergency Plan Subcommittee meets on the 4th Wednesday
44 of every month at the Emergency Operations Center at 9th and Cedar.

45

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1 Clifford Fred stated that global warming could lead to rapid climate change, which could lead to
2 landslides in Berkeley, so citizens should prepare for that risk as well.

3
4 Commissioner Wengraf stated the need for a coordinated plan between the School District, the
5 City, and the University.

6
7
8 **5. CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT**

9
10 There was no Chairperson’s Report.

11
12
13 **6. COUNCIL ACTIONS**

14
15 There was no report on Council Actions.

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17
18 **7. FUTURE AGENDAS**

19
20 There was no discussion of future agendas.

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22
23 **8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MAY 17 AND MAY 24, 2000 MEETINGS**

24
25 Approval of the minutes was tabled until the Planning Commission meeting of June 28, 2000.

26
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28 **9. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

29
30 There were no Committee Reports.

31
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33 **10. ADJOURNMENT**

34
35 The meeting was adjourned at 10:27.

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37
38