

20 November 2023

To the members of the Zoning Adjustment Board: re: 1652 University Avenue Project

We include in this packet previous correspondence between us and Allison Riemer, the Planner for the City of Berkeley, in which we describe our specific issues. (18 September) She has forwarded our correspondence to the architects at Studio KDA and we have recently met with their representative. Additionally, we offer the following.

We still believe this site is not appropriate for the planned building and its location behind our home will affect our regular use of the garden as an extension to our living space and our ability to come and go without significant impacts. (See letter of 9 October to Allison Riemer)

During our meeting, the Studio KDA representative addressed the issue of the boundary wall (see e-mail of 17 November to Allison Reimer). We believe the owners and architects are sincere in their willingness to preserve the wall that has been the back of our garden for the 50 years I have lived in the house and probably existed well before I moved in. Our concern on this issue pertains to the need for careful and consistent site supervision, essential for a project of this type. We understand that this issue falls in the purview of the ZAB. Our fear is that, despite the good will of owners and architects there could still be an "accident" such as occurred with the damaging of the redwood trees at the McGee/University site. That project has also been in progress for seven years! We need to be assured of on-going oversight of this new project to avoid major problems and significant delays in completion.

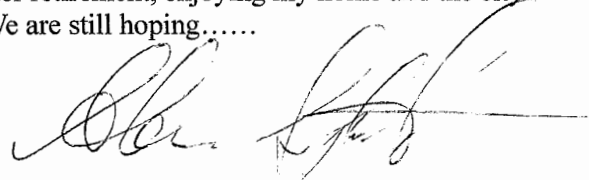
Additionally, we wish to readdress the parking issue. Sadly, whenever we try to explain the very serious impact the lack of parking will have on our everyday lives it is shrugged off as of no importance. It is often suggested that we "ride a bike". We USED to ride bikes. We continue to walk and take public transportation whenever possible. We use cars at night (as it is no longer safe to walk in Berkeley late at night, especially alone). We use our cars to transport friends who CAN no longer drive, to carry supplies, groceries and equipment for the activities we participate in and the organizations with which we volunteer. Not being able to park near our home would be a significant hardship. Our over 100-year-old house has no driveway or garage.

If there were a robust public transportation in Berkeley (and the Bay Area!) that would help. It would not, however, entirely solve the neighborhood parking problem. If the city of Berkeley were simultaneously investing in, for example, a subsidized, low-cost shuttle or night taxi service that would also help to mitigate the problem. However, we have seen no signs of such a program. AC Transit has cut routes in the last years, not added them. Other older people have expressed these concerns at city council meetings in the recent past.

I had hoped to have an active and productive life after retirement, enjoying my home and the city in which I have lived and worked for many years. We are still hoping.....



Kathie Hardy and Alan Spinks



1633 ADDISON



Kathie Hardy <kathie.hardy@gmail.com>

1652 University Project

1 message

Kathie Hardy <kathie.hardy@gmail.com>

Fri, Nov 17, 2023 at 9:36 AM

To: "Riemer, Allison" <ARiemer@berkeleyca.gov>

Hi Allison,

I am writing to tell you that we did NOT receive notification of the ZAB meeting on November 30. We only know because the architects invited us to a meeting to discuss design changes. We are very disappointed. You had said that you thought it was tentatively planned for November 30 but that all concerned would be personally notified by mail. Fortunately, we know now and can prepare for the meeting.

We asked the architects about site supervision and they said it would be up to the contractor hired and the city. We would like to be sure that there will be consistent oversight, especially to avoid what happened at the (still unfinished) building on McCee. Is this a topic appropriate to the ZAB, and if not, who would be the appropriate person to contact?

We appreciated the architect's statement that the owners "will do everything they can to preserve the boundary cinder block wall". We believe his statement. However, as we have seen, in practice errors are made by the workers and simply apologized for after the fact. This would be a very sad situation for us.

We will address parking and property value at the ZAB meeting but our fear is that none of the neighbors' concerns will be sufficient to change the plan.

The architect suggested we ask you for the url for the "design set" as we would like to make a copy. Would you mind sending us that information?

Thank you for your help,
Kathie Hardy

9 October 2023

Allison Riemer
Land Use Planning Division
City of Berkeley

Dear Allison Riemer,

This letter is a follow-up to our letter of 18 September 2023 and further addresses our concerns relating to the **multiple impacts of the 1652 University Avenue project** on our neighborhood

Concerns about FOX COURT and the HERTIAGE LIVE OAK TREE have been addressed by others. The comments below concern the 1633 ADDISON PROPERTY, which abuts the south boundary of the project, as well as some general neighborhood issues.

A portion of the south (rear) wall of the existing garages presently separates the 1633 Addison property from the project property. A long-established redwood shed is attached to the wall and equally longstanding climbing rose trees cover the rest of the wall between the properties. Demolition of the garages would destroy both shed and roses and leave the Addison garden exposed on its north side. In addition, the proposed building will remove evening light from the 1633 garden, with a consequent reduction of its potential use.

Pictures 1 & 2 show a general north facing view of the garden with the existing 'Ex. Radio Shack' building in view beyond the rose-covered wall and the cypress tree.

Picture 3 shows shed and roses more clearly.

Picture 4 is the north-facing view from the 1633 Addison deck with the 'Ex Radio Shack' building in clear view.

Picture 5 shows the evening sky beyond the cypress tree seen from the same deck
Please note that all of the sky in Pictures 3 and 4 will disappear from view with construction of the project.

We are in the process of determining the exact location of the cinderblock wall. However, whichever parcel holds the wall (or perhaps the wall crosses the property line) the most logical and considerate solution to protect the integrity of the 1633 Addison boundary would be to demolish the garages with care and leave the wall intact. The current project plan calls for a 15 foot set back, in any case, and the wall could be included in the set back area.

The other highly significant issue is parking on Addison and Jefferson streets. We addressed this issue briefly in our previous letter but since then we have been carefully observing the streets each day. The situation is increasingly problematic: these streets are already frequently saturated with parked vehicles. The situation will be worsened by the addition of 26 living units with zero parking spaces (not to mention the apartment building under construction [for seven years now] on University and McGee or the, even larger, building planned for University and California). The 1652 project will actually remove existing parking spaces on Jefferson. The new residents of all these units WILL have automobiles. Some older houses on Addison, including 1633, are not equipped with garages or even driveways.

electric transport since no provision has been made for that eventuality. In the absence of a robust public transportation system, reduced bus routes, a struggling BART and increasing safety issues, even in Berkeley, we are seriously concerned about our future in this neighborhood.

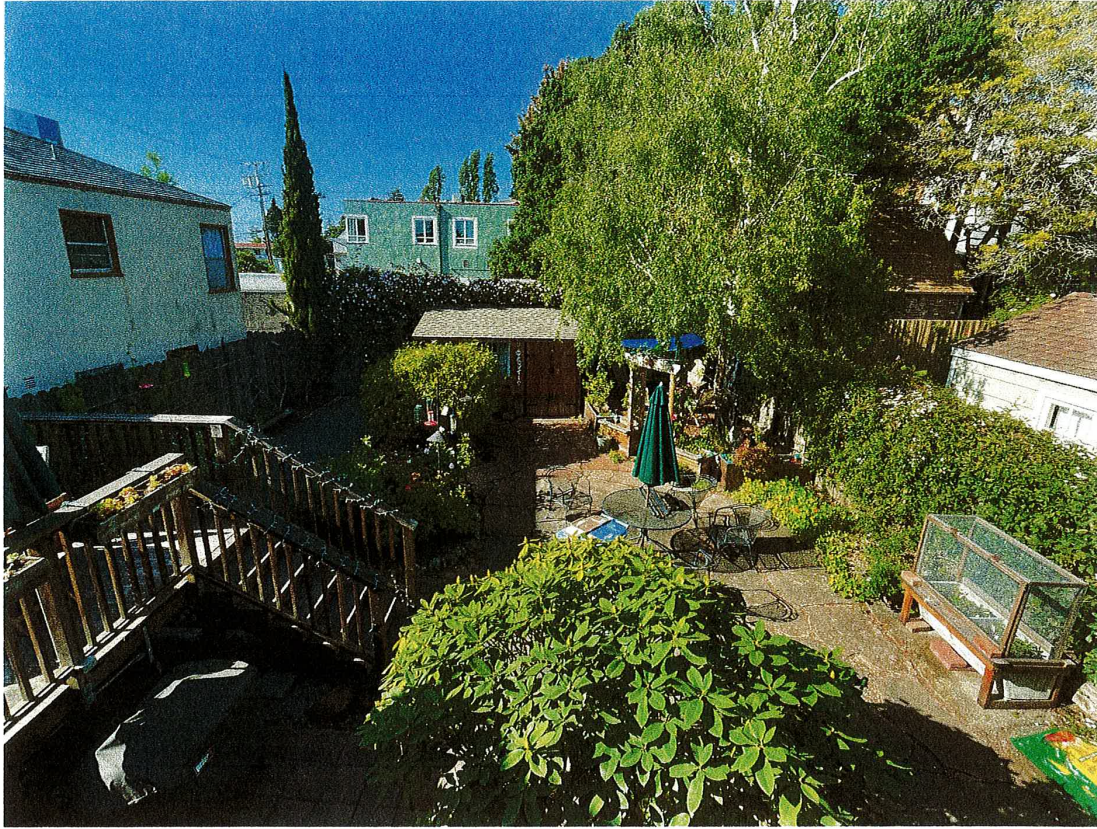
We simply mention these other issues, of which we are sure you are aware: decrease in our property value if we have to move and construction impacts including noise, dust and additional construction associated vehicles, etc.

We know that Berkeley needs more housing. We just think that this is not an appropriate space for so many units.

Thank you for your attention,

Kathie Hardy

Alan Spinks



Picture 1



2

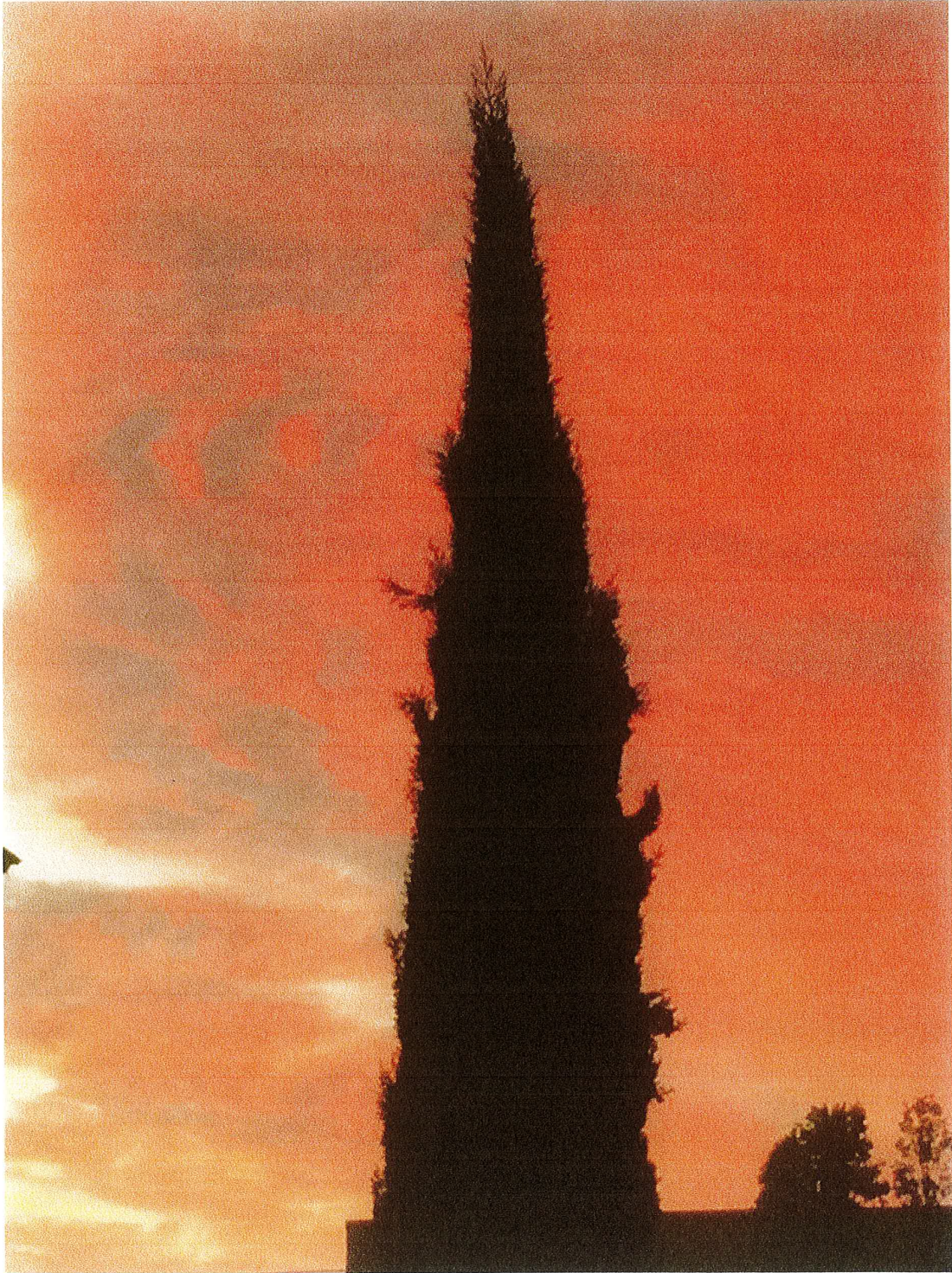
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Picture 2



Picture 34



Picture 45

18 September 2023

Allison Riemer
Land Use Planning Division
City of Berkeley

Dear Allison Riemer,

We are writing because we have serious concerns about the apartment (mixed use) building proposed for 1652-1658 University Avenue.

First, we do not think that the space is appropriate for such a large building, especially with no included parking for tenants. However, we have a more specific issue that will need attention if the project proceeds. The garages which are identified for demolition are attached to our garden wall, to which, for many years, our shed and our climbing roses have also been attached. The wall has been in existence possibly as early as the 1940s, and perhaps even earlier. The house is over 100 years old.

We are assuming that the construction company surveyed the parcel for the proposed building as well as our parcel (56-2004-9) to determine on which parcel the wall was built. We have always understood it to be on our property. If so, we ask that the garages be removed without damaging or removing the wall. If the wall is removed it will destroy the shed and flowers and leave the property without a secure boundary. If the wall is on the 1652-1658 parcel, we think it appropriate that the construction company provide a fence or wall to provide similar permanent security for our home and garden.,

Our final comments are about other expected impacts. The heritage oak tree will be affected, and other neighbors are concerned about this as well. But parking is a very serious issue for us, the controversy over cars in Berkeley notwithstanding. We still drive cars. We, and others, have no driveway or garage in this old neighborhood. The tenants of the proposed building WILL have cars. Even without permits they will park overnight and on weekends. They may even, in future, be discouraged from choosing electric cars with no charging available in the building. Parking on Addison is frequently saturated; furthermore, spaces on Jefferson will be lost. Sadly, the city's permit program, for which we pay, is unenforceable. The city cannot hire enough traffic enforcement officers to patrol every two hours. We walk and take public transportation whenever we can but walking in Berkeley is no longer as safe as it once was, especially for people of our age. We do not wish to be captive in our home because of a parking issue.

I am 79 and I have lived in my home for 50 years and had hoped to enjoy many more, to take advantage of what the Bay Area has to offer, after working here for most of my career.

Sincerely,

Kathie Hardy and Alan Spinks

Meredith Sabini, Ph.D.

27 Nov 2023

To: Zoning Adjustments Board
Re: 1652 University Ave

I am co-owner of Fox Commons, Berkeley historic landmark #211. When I purchased 1670 University as my lifelong intended live-work space, I initiated the landmarking. The protected oak tree also happens to be on my parcel.

The proposed project at 1652, initially launched in 2020 as a 3-storey mixed-use, runs the full length of Fox Commons. Now up to a 5-storey proposal, the project would entail waiving both the height limit and reduce open space. The resulting bldg would be taller than the oak tree, thus impeding air circulation and blocking sunlight for 1670, 1672, 1674, and 1676. Because of the necessary soil removal, tree roots could be accidentally damaged, the results of which might not show up for several years. For these reasons and others that follow, I ask that the Zoning Board consider declining this proposal.

During covid, occupants at Fox Commons began using the two open inner courtyards for meetings, a practice that we would like to continue. But a looming 5-storey bldg with apartments facing Fox Commons would diminish privacy and create a dark, gloomy atmosphere. Property values would diminish. Working here for the lengthy processes of demolition, soil extraction, and then construction --surely 4-5 years--would be almost impossible.

There is a massive mixed-use bldg on the corner of this short block, at 1698; it has been under construction and then rebuilding for 7 years. To propose another massive bldg on the other corner of a short block is, truly, asking too much of residents and business owners here. Preservation of Fox Commons, or any landmark, surely requires some regulation of structures that might go in next door.

Gordon Commercial has a fine reputation for improving existing properties throughout Berkeley for many years. Their newly remodelled office at 1680 University is our immediate neighbor, and most welcome. We are on friendly terms and have worked well together during this year of remodelling. I have no objection to the general proposal for a 5-storey mixed-use bldg, but merely wish it could provide parking and be located in a more obviously commercial part of town. Our half-block already has a new, large structure, and it feels like more than enough.

Thank you for considering my perspectives.

Received

NOV 29 2023

Land Use Planning

Sincerely,



Dr. Meredith Sabini
Psychologist & Author