



L A N D M A R K S
P R E S E R V A T I O N
C O M M I S S I O N

S T A F F R E P O R T

PROJECT PREVIEW
MAY 5, 2011

Acheson Commons (2100 Block of University Avenue)

Informational preview of a multi-parcel development project that includes three designated landmarks, 1987 Shattuck Avenue (MacFarlane Building), 2131 University Avenue (Acheson Physicians Building), and 2145 University Avenue (Sills Grocery & Hardware Company)

(Prepared by Jay Claiborne, Secretary to the Landmarks Preservation Commission)

I. Project Basics

A. CEQA Determination: An Environmental Impact Report will be prepared.

B. Parties Involved:

Applicant/ Owner	Equity Residential 26970 Aliso Viejo Parkway, #250 Aliso Viejo, CA 92656
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Figure 1: Vicinity Map

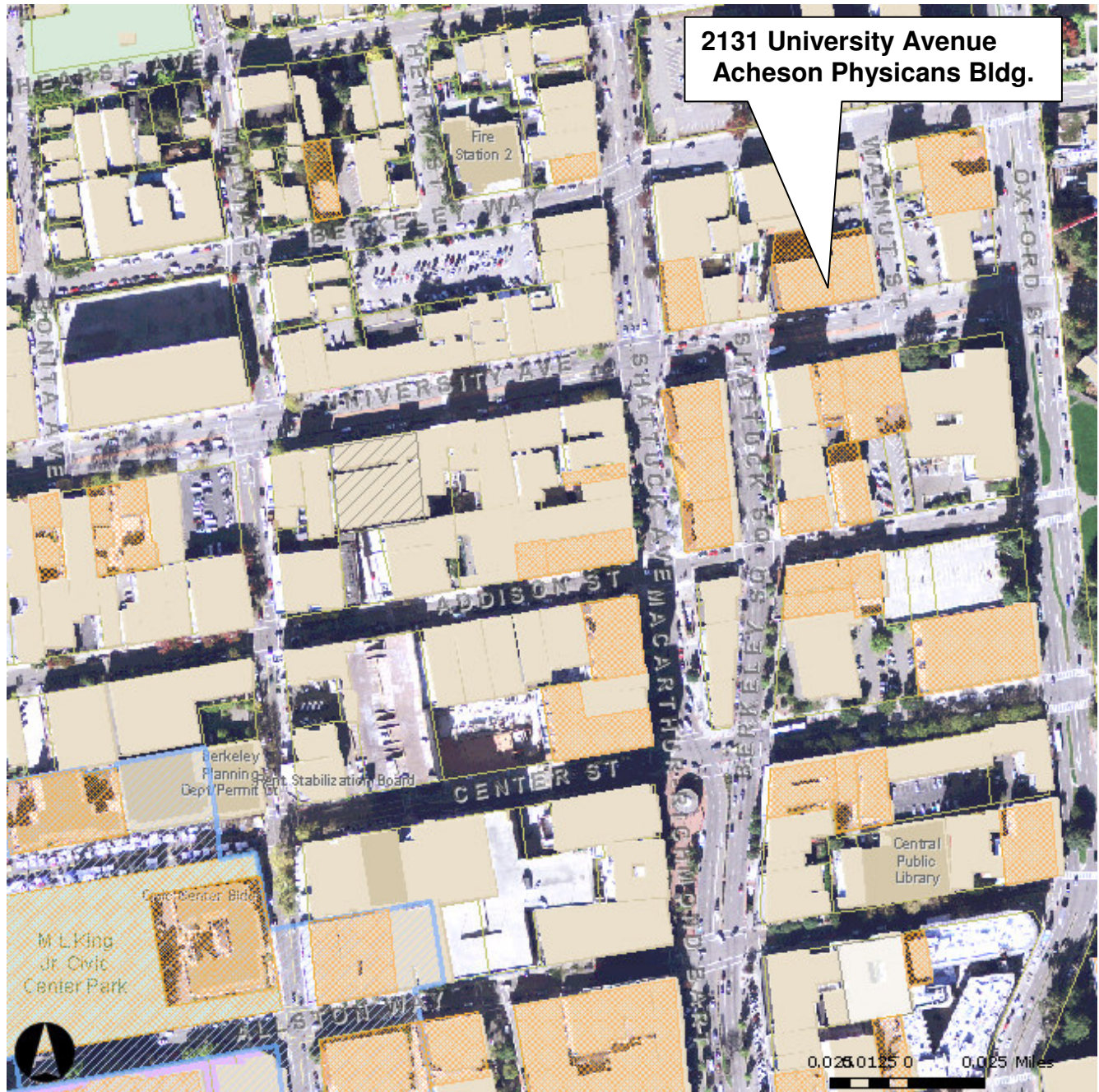


Table 1: Project Chronology

Date	Action
June 3, 2010	LPC Preview (of prelim plan)
November 22, 2010	Application submitted
December 21, 2010	Application incomplete
March 1, 2011	Application incomplete
April 12, 2011	Application incomplete
Pending	Application deemed complete
April 25, 2011	Public hearing notices mailed/posted
May 5, 2011	LPC Preview
May 12, 2011	ZAB Preview
May 19, 2011	DRC Preview
August 2011	EIR Notice of Preparation/ Scoping Meeting

II. Background

The majority of the parcels on the block bounded by University Avenue on the south, Shattuck Avenue on the west, Walnut Street on the east and Berkeley Way on the north are in common ownership and include 1987 Shattuck, 2111, 2125 and 2145 University Avenue, and 1922 and 1930 Walnut Street. The property at 2119 University Avenue (Bachenheimer Building) is also included in the common ownership but is not part of the proposed development plan.

III. Project Description

(Summarized from the Applicant's Statement)

The proposed project will utilize adaptive reuse, rehabilitation and new construction to redevelop the historic Acheson Block. All the properties fronting on University Avenue have been in common ownership for more than 100 years. Proposed additions and infill are proposed for mixed-use residential/commercial development. The increased density will create approximately 203 dwelling units, three live/work units and approximately 20,000 sq.ft. of rehabilitated commercial, including 10,000 sq.ft. of food service and 10,000 sq.ft. of retail. The Achesons Physicans building will be rehabilitated at its current height and mass with conversion of the upper floor of office use to new housing, while retaining ground floor retail space. Additional stories (5) are proposed for both the MacFarlane and Sills Grocery & Hardware buildings (1987 Shattuck and 2145 University Avenue) as well as for the non-designated one story retail building at 2111-2113 University Avenue. The two brown shingle multi-unit residential buildings on Walnut Street (1922 and 1930) are to be either relocated or demolished to make room for a new six (6) story residential apartment building.

The total project site comprises approximately 47,557 sq.ft. of land area, or approximately 1.09 acres, and is bifurcated by an existing mixed-use building (also

owned by the development entity) which was constructed in 2003. That building, the Bachenheimer, is complementary to the proposed redevelopment and in many ways an example of the style and type of development that is to be added to the other parts of the block.

IV. Issues and Analysis

Contextual Analysis:

As a large scale development at the intersection of University and Shattuck Avenues, the proposed project poses a major visual change to the character of downtown. In addition to the alterations that will be made to three landmark buildings, the project as a whole poses important issues for the historic setting of a large concentration of the landmark buildings in the older downtown area, including all of the buildings fronting University Avenue between Shattuck Avenue and Walnut Street.

The historic character of the block is more than the sum of the three landmark buildings. It will be important to retain the mix of styles and periods represented. Specifically, the styles of the three landmarks are characterized in the designations as follows:

- MacFarlane: Anonymous shopfront building, improved store building design;
- Acheson Physicans: Sullivanesque; and
- Sills Grocery & Hardware: Downtown Commercial

The additions proposed for the two designated corner properties (MacFarlane and Sills) should strengthen the defining differences between these edge locations by considering the architectural “language” associated with each. Note that while the MacFarlane building has two “fronts” (one facing Shattuck Avenue and one facing University Avenue), the Sill’s (Berkeley Hardware) Building has a front elevation (facing University Avenue) and a “side” elevation (facing Walnut Street).

The design of the proposed addition to the MacFarlane Building could maintain this relationship to the two very different types of streets, or it could introduce a new style of building that redefines the isolated one-block section of Walnut Street. By contrast, the MacFarlane Building already holds one corner of the complex major intersection of University Avenue and Shattuck / Shattuck Square in downtown Berkeley. The proposed addition to the MacFarlane Building has the opportunity to be a defining element of the expanded downtown plan area, which now includes the area between MLK, Jr. Way and Oxford Street north to Hearst Street. The design treatment of the southwest corner of the Block will be a critical, defining aspect of the intersection of two important streets in the City. The proposed addition to the landmark MacFarlane Building should address the corner in a commanding way, while also respecting the design integrity of the historic groundfloor façade in accordance with the Secretary’s Standards.

All of the additions to the Acheson Block should aspire to make a statement about what Berkeley has become **since** the early twentieth century, while remaining contextual to

the stylistic character of the landmark buildings. If consideration of a potential historic district occurs for downtown, it would most probably include either a portion or all of the south facing parcels of the Acheson Common Block fronting on University Avenue and would extend south to or just past the Shattuck Hotel/Hinks Building. Thus, the distinctions between the new and the old components of the Block are of particular importance.

Other contextual issues for consideration should include ways to strengthen the relationship between the Acheson Block and the adjacent blocks to the east and north, both of which are owned and either slated for in the process of redevelopment by UC Berkeley. UC's plan for the block to the east between Walnut and Oxford Streets is highly conceptual at present and may include an eight-story "gateway" mixed-use office and classroom building at the University Avenue and Oxford Street corner.

The eastern portion of the block to the north between Berkeley Way and Hearst Street is currently in construction for the very large scale Helios project, an alternative energy research lab. The development includes a sizable mid-block green space and pedestrian connection aligned with Walnut Street between Berkeley Way and Hearst Street. Development of the westernmost portion of the block is being planned for a new, multi-story UC Community Health building.

Alterations and Additions, Including New In-Fill Development Adjacent to Historic Properties:

The preview presentation is meant to be an opportunity for the LPC to provide guidance to the Applicant and they complete their application for this most important project. Staff has identified the following potential issues in accordance with the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

Landmarks Preservation Ordinance Review Standards and Criteria (Section 3.24.260)

- A. The commission shall be guided by the standards in this section in its review of permit applications for work on a landmark site, in an historic district or on a structure of merit site. In appraising the effects and relationships mentioned herein, the commission shall in all cases consider the architectural style, appearance, arrangement, height, design, texture, materials, color and appurtenances and such other facts as may be relevant.
- B. In all instances, the proposed work shall be as appropriate for and as consistent with the purposes of this chapter as is possible within the peculiar circumstances of the owner of the property and preservation or enhancement of the characteristics and particular features specified in the designation.

- C. Approval of permit applications pursuant to this section may be granted only upon determination that the proposal conforms to the criteria set forth in paragraphs 1. And 2. below.
1. For permit applications for construction, alteration or repair:
 - a. For applications relating to landmark sites, the proposed work shall not adversely affect the exterior architectural features of the landmark and, where specified in the designation for a publicly owned landmark, its major interior architectural features; nor shall the proposed work adversely affect the special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value of the landmark and its site, as viewed both in themselves and in their setting.
 - b. For applications relating to property in historic districts, the proposed work shall not adversely affect the exterior architectural features of the subject property or the relationship and congruity between the subject structure or feature and its neighboring structures and surroundings, including façade, setback and height; nor shall the proposed work adversely affect the special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value of the district. The proposed work shall also conform to such further standards as may be embodied in the designation of the historic district.
 - c. For applications relating to structure of merit sites, the proposed work shall not adversely affect the architectural features if architectural merit is the basis for designation; nor shall the proposed work adversely affect the special cultural, educational or historical interest or value if that is the basis for designation.
 2. For permit applications for demolition: the commission shall find that the designated landmark, historic district or structure of merit or portion thereof is in such condition that it is not feasible to preserve or restore it, taking into consideration the economic feasibility of alternatives to the proposal, and balancing the interest of the public in preserving the designated landmark, historic district or structure of merit site in its utilization.

Comment: The project involves additions to three landmark buildings and the potential relocation or demolition of two brown shingle, multi-unit houses that are listed on the State Historic Resources Inventory (SHRI) as potentially eligible for listing.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Full review of the project will be subject to these standards.

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.

Comment: The ground floor of the buildings will remain in use as retail storefront space, which will require minimal change to the ground floor facades. The conversion of the Acheson Physicans Building above the ground floor to residential use will be done within the existing framework of the building and will be minimally intrusive. While the interior of the Acheson Physicans Building is not part of its designation, it is the building as a whole that has a unique character, including the elevator lift and central core layout of office space. A reuse design sensitive to certain existing defining features could result in residential units with a unique character and market appeal.

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

Comment: With the possible exception of the loss of the iron stair to the interior mezzanane of the Sills Grocery & Hardware Building (2145 University Avenue), the project appears to retain all or most of the character defining features of each landmark building.

3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.

Comment: The architectural design of the new construction for the upper story additions to the landmark buildings as well as the design of the new infill building on Walnut Street uses traditional building forms and details that are considered by some as "false historicism." The designs for the additons do employ methods consistent with the Secretary's Standards that distinguish the new from the old, including set backs for the upper stories. New materials are proposed that are distinguishable from the original. Guidelines could be provided to define how much differentiation between the new and the old is desirable for such an important assemblage of new construction in a historic context. The guidelines also should include recommendations for use of color, ornamentation, and other types of decorative architectural detailing that are important ways to further differentiate the new from the old within a contemporary context.

4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

Comment: The project will not alter any changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right. There is a painted sign on the upper level of the east facing side wall of the Acheson Physican's Building that will be covered by the upper story addition to the Sills (Berkeley Ace) Hardware Building that some may consider

to have acquired historic significance. However, it will be hidden but not removed and the less visible painted sign on the upper portion of the west side elevation does remain partially visible.

5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

Comment: This criteria does not appear to raise any issues for the project as a whole. The project does appear to retain and restore distinguishing exterior architectural features. These features, as documented by the designations and application materials are noted as follows:

- MacFarlane Building (1987 Shattuck Avenue): Designation as a landmark was not approved initially when reviewed on October 18, 1982 and it was designated as a Structure of Merit. It was subsequently reviewed again on September 15, 1986 when it was designated as a City Landmark. The NOD does not identify features of significance. The designation application prepared by Anthony Bruce notes the following features: "The building is topped by a strongly articulated cornice consisting of balustrade and closely-spaced corbels, all of sheet metal. Below is a wide plain frieze of cement plaster. The band of arched clerestory windows with lathed wood mullions runs continuously and gives the building a somewhat 'Venetian' character. ... the shopfronts feature copper-framed display windows resting on green marble bulkheads."
- Acheson Physicians Building (2131 University Avenue): Designated a City Landmark January 7, 1983. The NOD does not identify features of significance. The designation application prepared by Anthony Bruce notes the following features: "A 4-story brown pressed brick commercial building ... with terra cotta detailing. The ground floor consists of shops divided by Ionic pilasters; and the arched entry with mosaic tile floor (the arch ends in scrolls similar to the voutes of the capitals). A 3-story recessed arch rises from the entry and encompasses 3 windows, and, at the top, a relief design. On either side of the arch are 3 rows of 3 windows all topped by splayed lintels. Above the heavy classical cornice is a brick parapet. Sides and back are of red brick and feature arched window openings. 4-story wood addition at back contains a rear stair and toilets. 'ACHESON PHYSICANS BUILDING' is painted at top of east and west walls. Faded rose paint on cornice and window frames harmonizes with brick of the façade. A tall flag pole is perched on roof above the entrance."
- Sill's Grocery & Hardware Company (2145 University Avenue; aka Ace Hardware): Designated a City Landmark on June 7, 2004; listed on the SHRI and eligible for the NR. Features of significance identified in the NOD include, "the assumed clerestory windows behind the Berkeley Hardware sign, the tan pressed brick on the exterior, the metal cornice on the east and south facades, the parapet on the south façade with an oval

plaque embellished with a terra cotta garland, the red and green tiles below the cornice, the central story entry, the store display windows, the interior wide starway with a balustrade of a cast iron design that leads to a mezzanine.”

6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

Comment: Several of the ground floor facades and entries have serious deterioration and require renovation. The MacFarlane Building, in particular may require replacement of missing or damaged features. The clerestory window features for several of the storefronts will require special consideration.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

Comment: Some of the facades may require cleaning. Proper treatments that do not cause damage to materials should be used.

8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

Comment: There are no known archaeological resources located in this Block.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

Comment: This standard poses several substantive recommended measures, including the essential need for differentiation between old and new as well as compatibility of the new to the old. Many of the details, including setbacks and use of contemporary materials and window treatments provide opportunities for subtle differentiation. However, guidance from the commission for this project is particularly important to avoid an impression of “false historicism.”

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Comment: The new construction is essentially non-reversible in most cases.

V. Recommendation

Staff finds that the project as presented for preview purposes generally meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and will not adversely affect the particular exterior architectural features of the landmark buildings or overall character of the Historic Block.

Staff recommends the LPC provide general guidelines for strengthening the project design relevant to future review of the Structural Alteration Permit application(s). Such guidelines also should identify issues that might be considered by the Design Review Commission (see the Design Review Checklist, Attachment 5).

Attachments:

1. Applicant's Statement and Project Plans (dated February 16, 2011);
2. NOD for 1987 Shattuck(MacFarlane Building, dated September 15, 1986);
3. NOD for 2131 University Avenue (Acheson Physicans Building, dated January 7, 1983);
4. NOD for 2145 University Avenue (Sill's Grocery & Hardware, dated June 7, 2004); and
5. Design Review Checklist, current.

Staff Planner: Jay Claiborne, Senior Planner and Secretary to the LPC