

To: Members of the Zoning Adjustments Board  
From: Toni Mester  
January 5, 2017

RE: DEIR for 1900 Fourth Street

I have read more than half of the DEIR and hope to finish by next week, but I would like to offer some comments in advance so that you can reference the document before the continuance of the public hearing.

I have read and submitted comments for several DEIRs in West Berkeley, as a private citizens and/or writing for the Sierra Club and Golden Gate Audubon, so I'm familiar with the process and content of such reports including the Waterfront Specific Plan, the Bayer Development Agreement, the Aquatic Park Improvement Program, and the West Berkeley Project.

The 1900 Fourth Street report has major deficiencies, mostly in the traffic study. The Trip Distribution map (Figure IV.B-10) on page 131 shows that 18% of the generated traffic will flow in the evenings south along Fourth and Sixth Streets towards Dwight and Ashby and along San Pablo. Other substantial flows will radiate from the project east along University, north along Fourth, Sixth, and San Pablo, and west onto the freeway.

And yet, the 1900 Fourth Street traffic study only analyzes seven intersections closest to the site. The West Berkeley Project studied 57 intersections in West Berkeley in 2009, and the existing conditions in that study should be compared with an expanded traffic analysis for Fourth Street.

The second question in the traffic analysis is the estimate of the project vehicle trip generation (Table 1V. B-6) on page 128 that shows the DEIR reduced the trips by 35%. How did they arrive at this figure? I checked two census products: B08301 Means of Transportation to Work and S0802, Means of Transportation to Work by Selected Characteristics, including the three census tracts in West Berkeley: 4220 west of Sixth Street, 4221 the Oceanview R-1A zone, and 4232 the Rosa Parks Neighborhood R-1A zone. Together, they include all residents west of San Pablo Avenue.

The 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates show these figures in the three census tracts /west of Sixth Street:

Total workers over 16 years: 3850 /942  
Commuted by car, truck or van: 1828 /470 (48% /50%)  
Commuted via public transit: 655 /145 (17% /15%)  
Bicycle: 340 /70 (9% /7%)  
Walked: 400 /86 (10% /9%)  
Worked from home: 543/142 (14%/15%)

These figures suggest that even West of San Pablo Avenue, the closer to the freeway, the higher percentage commute by motor vehicle, continuing the trend over-all in Berkeley: the closer to the freeway, the more people commute by car. Conversely, the use of transit, bicycles, and walking decreases.

To be accurate, the DEIR should specifically study the newer residential projects near the Freeway, just south of University Avenue, not only the means of commute but also the turnover in the units along the railroad tracks. Given the high percentage of people who work from home, are such units conducive and appropriate for such purposes?

The net reduction of parking for the Fourth Street retail area could have a huge financial impact. Although not an environmental impact per se, the displacement of parking to other locations from the Spenger's lot should be studied in greater detail. It is assumed that other lots and street parking provides capacity but the routes and volume are not explored. Anyone who visits Fourth Street has experienced the heavy traffic as people look for parking. Clearly, even with the Spenger's lot, the parking capacity is deficient for the demand.

Regarding the controversy surrounding the shell mound site, the DEIR should map the original course of Strawberry Creek, which can be found in the Alameda County Assessor's Maps based on the 19<sup>th</sup> century lot lines that clearly show the location of Strawberry Creek traversing the southern end of the site near University Avenue. Without doubt of its location, given that native peoples lived near the mouths of creeks, photographic evidence, and the exhumation of bones and shells, this landmark should be commemorated. The suggested mitigation is not shown on the project plans, and therefore one can only surmise that it will be negligible. A substantial area of land at this site should be dedicated to public education and enjoyment. A park-like open space at the corner of Hearst and Fourth Street would be appropriate. The City should also consider closing Fourth Street to traffic north of the entry to the

parking garage and creating an expanded pedestrian zone that connects with the paseo on the Spenger's block.

Denise Pinkston, then Chair of the ZAB, suggested at the ZAB scoping session that the traffic study of intersections should be expanded as well as a more substantial commemoration of the Ohlone Shell Mound, but the DEIR ignored her comments. This bodes ill for the developer's response to the City's interests. There are some developers who will make changes and those who will not compromise. Given the sensitive nature of this site, one would hope for a responsive, not an intransigent developer.