

BNC eNews, Issue 15

February 16, 2015 by [BNC Archivist \(Edit\)](#)

Almost unbelievably the drought continues, Berkeley's problems multiply and BNC's eNEWS posts its 15th issue! A year ago, we didn't think any of this was possible. But here we are, eager and determined to implement the principle that strong neighborhoods are the backbone of a great and livable city. And, we are heartened to find that we are not alone in advocating for strong neighborhoods. This is a growing movement across the Nation, as you will find out in the upcoming showing of the documentary file *The Vanishing City* – see below for details.

Fulfilling this fundamental principle is why we exist, why we publish this newsletter, why we write letters and go to meetings — all as volunteers when we'd rather be doing almost anything else. But we can't do it alone. From commenting on development proposals, to arriving at practical solutions, to forming a vision for the future, we need you, now more than ever before, if we want to live in a place that welcomes more than the 1%. BNC wants to see our City do something to change the current path of gentrification which limits the diversity in the City. You might consider what you can do? Our answer is a lot, and a good starting point is:

- 1. Spread the BNC eNEWS:**
 - a. Send an e-mail to bnc50@berkeleyneighborhoodscouncil.com with the word "subscribe" in the subject line to ensure that you receive your personal copy.
 - b. Forward the eNEWS to both your neighborhood and personal e-mail list and include the same request about forwarding to their lists.
- 2. Attend BNC's General Meetings and help guide discussions and decisions. You are a part of this and your voice is important.**
- 3. Attend the upcoming series of Forums. These exciting meetings will begin with informing you about current and pending development proposals, our current permitting process, followed by separate sessions that provide detailed information about such issues as density, housing and the University. With that knowledge, together, we can formulate and implement a vision for Berkeley's future that is respectful of our neighborhoods. The First Forum will be held April 8th. (See What We're Thinking About article below for full details.)**

Next, we Bring you an Important Message from the Berkeley Police Department

BNC received a communication from Berkeley Police Officer Brandon Smith, the new Beat Area 1 Coordinator. Officer Smith writes:

Dear Berkeley Residents:

There has been a long history of people falling victim to phone and money scams throughout the United States and Berkeley is not immune from this occurrence. There are many different scams that occur and re-occur over the years. The FBI has a list of "Common Scams" on their website that is attached here:

www.fbi.gov/scams-safety/fraud

Some History for the IRS Scam: Approximately 2 years ago an ongoing scam began where a person would call your home or cell phone and identify themselves as an IRS agent, Treasury Officer or other official sounding position with the government. The person would then inform you that you have “back taxes” or a “Back payment” that was due. The caller usually would threaten an immediate arrest if an immediate payment was not made. Sometimes this call comes in as an automated voice message asking you to call a number back. Payments are usually requested via a pre-paid credit card, money gram, or wire transfer of funds.

It appears these scams have started to re-appear in our community. I wanted to get the word out to all of you about this in case you were not aware of it.

Things you should know:

The IRS and Treasury Dept will not make first contact with anyone via the telephone.

Specific “unusual” forms of a payment should always raise a red flag.

*If you feel the call you received is a scam **do not** send any money until you have checked into the validity of the call.*

Never give your credit card information over the telephone unless you know who you are speaking with and are certain the business or agency you have contacted is a credible organization.

Local law enforcement reports are not the best way to report a caller as described above. If you receive a call regarding the IRS scam visit the below website to file a report with the Treasury Inspector General. On the top, right hand side of the page there is a RED box titled, “IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting”. Click this box and complete the information requested.

www.treasury.gov/tigta/

If you do become a victim of the scam and have a monetary loss you can contact the Berkeley Police Departments non-emergency line at (510) 981- 5900 to file a police report.

“The Drought”

On March 18, The Drought and Berkeley were coupled in a mention in Tom Barnidge’s column in the *West County Times*. Mr. Barnidge started off that day’s column by saying

For those of you who enjoy comic relief, the Berkeley City Council is Treasure Island.

What prompted this statement was a Consent Calendar item submitted by Council Members Capitelli and Maio on March 17 to do the following:

Direct City staff in the Public Health Department to devote time and resources toward developing a City-wide tap water campaign promoting the excellent quality of our local water and encouraging residents to consume it. As an initial step in this effort, direct staff to seek funding to support this campaign.

Calling the Council’s plan *strangely timed at the height of the drought*, Barnidge went on to state that the whole idea was to *promote water as a healthier liquid refreshment* to those who would be inclined to drink sodas. There was one public comment about the item to the effect that The Drought should be a part of this *conversation*. The outcome? The Council unanimously approved the item without mention of The Drought.

Now, in this Fifteenth Issue, read about...

- - [**What We’re Thinking About**](#)
 - Interested in gentrification in Berkeley? Want to find out more about development in Berkeley? Come to our first in a series of Forums on:
 - **“Times are a Changing. A Berkeley for All”**
 - Wednesday, April 8, 7:15 to 9:30**
 - East Bay Media Center, 1939 Addison (Downtown)**
 - This Forum is a real Can’t Miss Opportunity. There will be: a free hour-long showing of the acclaimed documentary, *The Vanishing City*, a story of changing land use trends; a presentation by a special City guest on *Berkeley Today and Future Development*; and time for your Questions and Answers.

- The Monarch Butterfly's problems that we told you about a year ago have finally received national attention. We tell you what you can do *now* to continue to see these beauties year after year.
- **Neighborhood News, Round and About**
- So many things to know about...
- The *fog cutter* is back, only this time with communal straws at the soon to be re-opened **Spats, located at 1974 Shattuck**.
- The California Supreme Court has weighed in on **2707 Rose Street** and it may be contrary to over 40 years of statutory and regulatory authority and all relevant legislative history and rule-making regarding Environmental Impact Reports. And, we still don't know with a certainty if the proposed 10,000 square foot single family house at the top of Rose Street will damage the LaLoma Viaduct and downhill properties on Shasta Road.
- We'll find out if the City's ordinance to consider loss of sunlight has any meaning at all in determining "detriment" when the Council acts on the appeal at **2135 Roosevelt**.
- **Significant Community Benefits** are required for five buildings in the Downtown, an issue particularly important for the proposed 194 foot tall building at 2211 Harold Way, and the Berkeley Plaza Hotel, the office, commercial, residential tower planned at 2129 Shattuck. What should the developer have to give back in exchange for the long-term, lucrative economic benefit that came with the added height that voters agreed to when approving Measure R in 2010?
- Does the Mayor's proposal to allow as a matter-of-right (no notice to neighbors), **accessory dwelling buildings** in the backyards of single family homes in all residential districts (except on Panoramic Hill) change R-1 zoning into R-2?
- The Honda Auto Dealership is moving to Any Mountain at 2777 Shattuck Avenue and the City has agreed to pay some \$100,000 in permit fees. No problem about the fees, but someone forgot to tell the neighborhood that Honda's auto service center would then be located behind the Any Mountain store where residential properties abut the commercial district.
- **Neighborhood Forum**
- There are two submissions from neighborhood groups:
- **The Manhattan Project: The Destruction of Telegraph Avenue and Surrounding Neighborhoods** comes from the South of Dwight Neighbors. They are concerned about the impacts of proposed developments on Telegraph Avenue south of Dwight Way and are proposing a solution that would allow growth and still protect their homes.
- The other submission is a real shocker: **The Closing of Alta Bates Hospital by 2030** comes from the Bateman Neighborhood Association.
- A City without a fully functioning hospital and the possibility of inadequate urgent and emergency care is a very serious matter and requires that we

unite in our response. The Alta Bates Summit Medical Center has indicated it will seek input from community groups. Now is the time to start that conversation.

- [**Featured Neighborhoods**](#)
- The march of the Mini-Dorms goes on, and on, and on. To what end? We give you a timeline for a better understanding of what has happened with the landmarked houses at **2201-05 Blake** and the development proposal that is connected to **2204 Dwight Way**. **New Operating Standards** are being proposed for Mini-Dorms and Group Living Accommodations that will also apply to fraternities and sororities.
- [**The Cultural Corner**](#)
- See the list of 38 words/phrases which are attributed to being first used by Shakespeare. BNC has a special challenge about that list.
- [**On the Neighborhood Food Prowl**](#)
- Get an answer to the age-old question — what exactly is corned beef and why we associate the Irish with that particular dish. You won't get this kind of information elsewhere!
- [**Letters**](#)

Last but not least, there are two important letters for your consideration:

- How you can help solve the literacy gap in Berkeley, and
- Information about the new Berkeley Community Job Board

Again, BNC wants to remind you to spread the Neighborhood News by forwarding this issue to everyone in your neighborhood and to your personal e-mail list. Ask each of them to do the same. People can subscribe by sending an e-mail to bnc50@berkeleyneighborhoodscouncil.com.

Let us know how we're doing, the good and the bad. We really want to make a difference and need to know if we are missing something, or stated something incorrectly. Send comments, suggestions and articles to newsletter@berkeleyneighborhoodscouncil.com.