

BNC eNews, Issue 18

February 1, 2016 by [BNC Archivist \(Edit\)](#)

This Is The 18th Edition of The Berkeley Neighborhoods Council eNEWS!

This issue started out to be a review of the end of the year — the joy of the Holidays was over, but then January slipped past in a torrent of icy cold and rain, and today the Super Bowl came and went. Throughout all, our City pushed on in ways that deeply concern us. As we look toward the year ahead, those concerns fall into four categories:

1. The continued drum roll of development, combined with a reluctance to engage in meaningful long-range planning resulting in neighborhoods being overwhelmed, small businesses being more at risk, and our City's basic need to provide Housing for Everyone being ignored;
2. The on-going deterioration of our infrastructure from streets to sewers to parks. We've lost the Berkeley Pier, the Willard Swimming Pool, the Warm Water Pool, and parts of the Rose Garden and John Hinkel Park, plus Old City Hall is literally falling down before our eyes and many community facilities are simply not safe to use;
3. The lack of a real working relationship with the UC Berkeley campus on such issues as land use, housing, traffic and costs of services; and
4. Too many residents have opted into a "Don't Bother Me" response. There are those who say it's impossible to create community in this place, so they walk away from trying to rebuild the community that made Berkeley the place where we wanted to live. You say, "my voice doesn't count" so why come to meetings, write letters or make phone calls. All too often you are correct — your voice isn't being heard and you don't like being labeled as being just a "Nimby" who stands in the way of "progress" by always saying no.

BNC was formed to respond to these very issues. We are committed to addressing them with calm, accurate information and serving as a harbor to our neighborhoods in the hopes that Berkeley will join what neighborhoods across this Nation are doing — standing up against the monetary greed that is replacing sound planning and community-involved growth.

To make this happen Berkeley neighborhoods must work together in partnership and each and every one of you must help by:

1. **Spreading the BNC eNEWS the SPF way:**
 - 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. When you receive your personal copy of our eNEWS, **participate** in as many of the issues as you want and **then forward** the eNEWS to every person on your e-mail list with the same request about forwarding to their lists.
2. **Attending BNC's General Meetings and Forums and help guide discussions and decisions. You are a part of this and your voice is important. Help us plan meetings about subjects you want to know about and to invite speakers you want to hear from. You will always receive advance notice about dates, times, places and people involved.**

With your help, experience and knowledge, together, we can formulate and implement a vision for Berkeley's future that is respectful of our neighborhoods.

The recent weather leads us to the following comments. All of us probably have mixed feelings about disliking the dark, overcast days of bitter cold and pouring rain, while at the same time rejoicing that the years of drought might be coming to an end. But all too frequently, we see the heartbreaking sight of wet and cold people, old and young, huddled together on our streets, the lawn in front of Old City Hall, under the I-80 freeway overpass at Gilman, or in doorways of businesses. Some had tents, some were simply wrapped in blankets or tarps, some had huge mounds of stuff or nothing at all. We were shocked to read in the newspapers that the City had to "scramble" — yes, that's the word they used — to find emergency shelter for these people.

We learned that back on November 3, 2015, Council Member Arreguin put on the Council agenda a referral to the City Manager requesting her to consider the "Tier One Recommendations" proposed by the City's Task Force on Homelessness. Among those recommendations was the establishment of "Warming Centers" during the winter. The Council deferred acting on that request to their November 17 meeting, then deferred it again to December 1, and again to December 15 when it was deferred to the January 12 Council meeting and then went on Holiday break. When they came back, there was no January 12 Council meeting. A new item to "Declare a Housing Shelter Crisis" authored by Council Member Worthington had been placed on the Council agenda of January 19, 2016.

We discussed this issue at our January 16, 2016 Regular BNC meeting and attendees decided to send a letter to the City Council for their January 19, 2016 Council meeting that covered the following points:

- It was unacceptable that the City knowing that an El Niño weather pattern was setting in, had to "scramble" to establish local emergency shelters.
- Berkeley needs an "*immediate, detailed shelter plan that will remain in place through March or as long as the cold and rain continue.*
- After such a plan is in place, the City needs to formulate a longer-term plan to address the real problems being encountered by our neighborhoods. Berkeley should *"take the lead in calling together all the cities in Alameda County and the*

County itself“ to discuss regional planning regarding services and housing for the homeless and to address the issue of mental health services that are needed by a significant number of homeless individuals.

At the January 19, 2016 Council meeting the item declaring an emergency homeless housing crisis was moved from “Action” to “Consent Calendar” where it was unanimously approved without discussion. The item was modified to adopt Resolution No. 67,357-N.S. which stated that this action was a referral to the City Manager with the provision that she could make whatever changes are necessary to maximize Berkeley’s chances to obtain additional funding for this purpose.

At that same meeting, Interim City Manager Dee Ridley-Williams told the Council that on Christmas Eve and January 2, 2016, the City opened a “warming center” at the South Berkeley Senior Center, offering “sleeping pads and blankets”. There was a capacity for 65, with 45 using the facility, and no one being turned away, although some individuals declined to stay there. We also know from newspaper reports that shelter was offered at the First Congregational Church at Dana and Durant.

Ms. Ridley-Williams added that City staff was also working on finding appropriate space or spaces for the 50 to 100, 64- gallon storage containers that the City, per Council direction, is to provide to the homeless for storage of their belongings when enforcement of the new law about using more than two square feet of sidewalk space for their belongings begins. (Note, it has been reported to BNC that enforcement has already happened, but we don’t know if that is accurate.) The staff will come back to the Council in 1 to 2 weeks with a report on the *“the impacts on neighborhoods”* of one large space or several spaces in locations that range from *“Downtown to West Berkeley,”* so stayed tuned. There was no discussion of BNC’s request for Council action on homeless as a regional issue or on the request for additional mental health services.

Now, look at what’s in this eNEWS issue...

- **What We’re Thinking About**

- Water, water everywhere. In spite of the rain, the drought isn’t over yet. EBMUD is unique among California water districts and let’s hope there is no La Niña ending to El Niño!
- We reveal a *new and startling method* to think about the affordability of your monthly rent payment. It’s all about turkeys. When applied to San Francisco, it puts that city high on a nationwide list.
- A great and lovely gift came to Berkeley when hundreds of Monarch Butterflies stopped off in Aquatic Park during their winter journey south. Berkeley can help nurture this gift by eliminating pesticide use and planting the right kind of milkweed.

- Development is everywhere, but unfortunately much of it isn't "a great and lovely gift." How can we change that? Here's one suggestion. What do you think?
- **Neighborhood News, Round and About**
 - The Library Gardens balcony collapse was held to be a "Top 10" news story of 2015, and a reader wonders whether the City is doing enough to prevent similar future problems related to all the new construction that is happening. We're going to try and find out.
 - How about 1,000 new students entering Cal this fall, and 1,000 more entering in each of the next four years. Where will they all live? No one knows. The students care, but does the City and the Campus hear them? Make no mistake, this is a matter that concerns the entire City as students "double" and "triple-up" everywhere in order to afford the rent.
 - The Patrick Kennedy project to demolish and replace the CIL building at 2539 Telegraph Avenue with units said to be specifically for students is approved. But does it have to be at the expense of the residential neighborhood in back of it?
 - WOW — here's a concept! BNC makes a push toward better planning by suggesting that the City establish a relationship between the Director of Planning and the Zoning Adjustments Board.
- **Neighborhood Forum**
 - The long, sad story of "The Residences at the Berkeley Plaza" at 2211 Harold Way. Its cast of characters include the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the Zoning Adjustments Board, the City Council, a former high ranking Berkeley Planning Department official who shepherded the approval of Berkeley's Downtown Area Plan and now is in the private practice of getting approvals for this development, and two individuals who are standing against a real estate investment firm and a large, well-connected law firm in Los Angeles. The plot has lots of twists and turns.
- **Featured Neighborhoods**
 - Another chapter has been written in the continuing saga of the Mini-Dorms and for the first time it includes Group Living Accommodations (GLAs), commonly known as fraternities, sororities, co-ops, etc. New operating standards that apply to both Mini-Dorms and GLAs were approved to correct problems involving excessive alcohol use, traffic, noise, trash, sexual assaults, etc. It was revealed that in 2014 there were over 1,500 medical transports involving students, a significant portion due to alcohol. These problems are a drain on City fire and police resources, and while the new operating standards are a good step in solving these problems, there is concern about enforcement.
- **On the Neighborhood Food Prowl**
 - Read about Trip Advisor's Top 20 ranking of Berkeley restaurants. Maybe you'll be surprised.

- **Letters**

- A follow-up on a prior letter about vehicles in Berkeley. This will tell you about the number of cars, trucks, motorcycles and "other" that are registered in your zip code.

As always, we wish you happy reading and urge you to contact us. Have we gotten something wrong? Have we missed something you want to hear about? How about submitting an article yourself? Please, let us hear from you.