

BNC Meeting Minutes
June 13, 2020
Meeting Conducted via Zoom 10 am - Noon

Attendees: Mayor Arreguín, Meryl Siegal, Janis Ching, Dean Metzger, Adolfo Cabral, Anthony Corman, Carol Stone, David Cole, David Ushijima, Jacob Picheny, Lilana Spindler, Jacquelyn McCormick, Olga Louchakova-Schwartz, Shirley Dean, Wayne Heiser, Jurgen Aust, Michael Katz, Jason K, Shane Krpata, Theo Possett (Le Roy Steps neighborhood).

1. Mayor Arreguín stated that ABAG is currently wrapping up the new Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goals for cities within its jurisdiction. He indicated that the Governor has advised ABAG: that the Bay Area is expected to grow by around 2 million people; that the Bay Area will need to build some 441,000 units; and, that Berkeley's housing allocation will potentially increase from 3K to 6K. The Mayor's emphasis is on building worker housing in job rich areas and in transit rich areas near transit hubs. He wants to develop housing in "high resource areas" – areas with jobs, schools and located on transit corridors.
 - o Mayor Arreguín stated that ABAG is pushing to have suburban cities like Sunnyvale, Cupertino, Mt. View, and Palo Alto take on a fair share of the future needed housing units so that cities like Berkeley and Oakland that are already very dense do not have to build a disproportionate share of housing. In regard to the housing imbalance in Berkeley and the former redlining that occurred in our City in the past, the Mayor said we need to address the public housing imbalance. He continues to be in favor of more development, as that will allow us to increase the number of affordable units vis a vis what we can build through the Housing Trust Fund (HTF) and Measure O funds. He pointed out that the amount of funds in the HTF is not nearly enough to meet the affordable housing numbers that is needed. There is about 135 million Measure O funds to build affordable housing and more money can be raised through future bond measures.
 - o He is concerned with providing both more affordable housing and ways to house the homeless population which is growing. There are currently about 1500 homeless people in Berkeley.

- In response to a question about environmental hazards on land in West Berkeley including on San Pablo Avenue (1835 San Pablo, the former Midas shop), the Mayor noted that the West Berkeley Plan from 1993 was a good plan but needs to be revisited. However, he did not see it changing the industrial nature of West Berkeley.
 - The Mayor did not directly address the issue when asked about how his vision for how development in our city will be impacted by earthquakes, sea level rise, wildfire risk and climate change in general. Instead, he pointed to the need for a new General Plan.
2. In response to a question about density and whether Berkeley's Building Code could provide protection from future pandemics like COVID-19, the Mayor responded that the existing Code does not include such protective provisions. He suggested that perhaps the Public Health officer might be willing to participate in the planning process to weigh in on possible pandemic protection measures that could be implemented in the Building and Zoning code.
- In response to a question about whether the Public Health officer has the bandwidth or interest to participate in Land Use Planning policy, Mayor Arreguín agreed to talk to the Public Health Officer to see if she wants to weigh in on the issue of co-housing and about potential spread of the virus from gatherings on outdoor decks that over-look homes, back yards, etc.. He also outlined efforts to get masks to the homeless population. He added that the University will likely do a hybrid of on-line and in-person classes, at least for this fall, and that could impact the housing demand.
3. Mayor Arreguín is currently working with Public Works and Police to find ways to close certain public streets in order to provide more outdoor activities including dining, yoga, and other activities. More details were to be announced at June 19th Town Hall. <Note, the Town Hall is now scheduled for June 26.>
- He also pointed to several City actions that have already been made to close streets: Russell near MLK, 9th St., and Addison.
4. The Mayor does not see any change in BART's plans to develop the parking lots at North Berkeley and Ashby Stations, and despite COVID the development plans are moving forward. He says it is too early to make any decision as to whether there will be a return to BART ridership and whether that may alter BART's and/or developers plans for housing on the BART lots.

- North Berkeley Neighborhood Association (NBNA) Report: The Citizens Advisory Group for BART development has met, but the consultant hired to lead the discussion did not present clear guidelines for how the recommendations to the Planning Commission will be formulated. According to the Mayor, BART will sign a ground lease to a developer and thus BART would get income from the project. The Mayor stated that housing built at the North Berkeley should not include extensive height that would be out of sync with the surrounding neighborhood.
 - The Mayor said that new development will be on major transportation corridors. He used the term “micromobility” and that there would be a housing piece and transportation piece. He was sure that people on the transit corridors would take public transportation. The exact details of the transportation and transit issues in Berkeley were left unspecified by the Mayor despite a question regarding traffic flow, especially in downtown Berkeley.
5. There will be a public meeting to present UC’s new Long Range Development Plan (LRDP), most likely in December. (Note: The LRDP process is different from a current UC planning effort that is about developing housing – some 9000 beds – on University owned land – People’s Park, Oxford Tract, etc.) It is estimated that the University’s student population will cost the city roughly \$21M in infrastructure, fire, and police costs compared to the \$1.2M that the University currently pays the City based on the agreement made by the former Mayor Bates and UC. Regarding UC Berkeley, the Mayor saw himself and UC as partners, and that UC “needed” to develop more housing for students. He also stated that people should not be denied access to the excellent education he, himself, had received at UC Berkeley. The Mayor mentioned the development on the “southside” as not having inclusionary units.
 6. 2720 San Pablo neighbors announced they are organizing to voice concerns related to building massing and traffic for the group living that is being proposed for that site and have been talking with the developer.