

HERE AND THERE: Part 1

Since the City Council is in recess, we thought it would be a good time to take a look at some neighborhood issues where your opinion and or participation is being actively sought. So, here they are in no particular order

COVID 19:

A check of the City's website as of this date indicates that in Berkeley there are 484 cases, 6 deaths. We've heard from other sources that the number of positive cases in Berkeley is higher, but if you're interested in checking from time to time, you can find this information by simply going to the **City's website and clicking on Covid-19**.

If you have any symptom such as coughing, headache, fever, or shortness of breath, contact your doctor as immediate testing is extremely important. The City of Berkeley offers free testing, so if you suspect you have been in contact with someone with Covid 19, have been traveling, plan to travel or work in a field with exposure to many people, BNC, along with lots of other groups, urges you to make an effort to get tested ASAP.

Three of the test sites listed are:

- 1) The Frances Albrier Community Center, 2500 Park Street, between August 17-28;
- 2) MLK Jr Youth Services Center, 1730 Oregon: and
- 3) some CVS sites-not listed by address.

It's free but you have to make an appointment, so call the numbers listed on the website. There is also a program offering self-testing. So, all and all, let's just get it done, and soon.



Development Planned for the North and South Berkeley BART Stations:

It started back in September 2018 when then-Governor Jerry Brown signed AB2923, a bill that allowed development on BART's 48 stations which per its supporters would convert "mostly empty" parking lots into thriving transit friendly communities. BART would classify each station and implement Transit Oriented Development (TOD) standards linked to each classification. Funding for affordable housing was to be in place by Dec. 2020.

For the South Berkeley Station, 50% of the housing had to be at moderate, low, very low and extremely low income levels. Among the "desired outcomes" to be considered were an African American Resource Center, flea market, ground floor retail, restaurant and family-oriented establishments, neighborhood non-profit and affordable workspaces.

For the North Berkeley station, 35% of the housing had to be at low, very-low and extremely low-income levels. Development could also include small scale retail, services, offices, and open space, and "desired outcomes" could be "balanced" with retail.

Our City signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with BART and formed a 16-member Community Advisory Group (CAG) to provide public input into the process of determine land uses/zoning for each site. Eleven members were selected by Mayor Arreguin and Council Members Bartlett (District 3) and Kesarwani (District 1). Five more members were appointed one each from the Transportation, Housing Advisory, and Planning Commissions and 2 from the Disability Commission.

Neighborhood groups have formed around each station. In North Berkeley, The Berkeley Neighborhood Alliance can be reached at **northberkeleyneighborhoodalliance@gmail.com**. Their motto is "Public Land for the Public Good!" They support:

1. Reversing BART's classification of the site as an Urban Center means that the *minimum* height of buildings on the site is seven stories. This classification is not appropriate because the site sits in the middle of an already developed low-rise, residential neighborhood and there are no buildings outside of Downtown that are seven stories or higher.
2. Holding the City to the provision in the Berkeley/BART MOU which states that BART will work with the City to zone in the "context of the built form characteristics of a surrounding lower density neighborhood". There is enough land available at the site to build four stories in the center, two stories at the perimeter.
3. Housing on the site that is affordable and rent controlled.
4. Maximizing both affordability *and* green construction, so that solar panels are not shadowed by high new construction and that the site's connection to the Ohlone Trail should be preserved and protected.

South Berkeley BART is in a designated "opportunity zone" which provides a federal tax break incentive to developers who build in that area. While BART owns the land where the station is located, the "air rights" are owned by the City which has been a controversial issue for years.

The South Berkeley group, Friends of Adeline can be reached at www.friendsofadeline.org/contact . Their motto is "South Berkeley needs a People's Plan for Adeline Street." They have been busy working on the Adeline Corridor Plan and support The Adeline Community Initiative in order

to reverse the policies that have resulted in displacement of African Americans and created a housing crisis for low-income and working-class people.

This Initiative includes the following for both the Ashby BART site and the whole area:

1. Guaranteed space for the Ashby flea market.
2. Build and fund an African American Holistic Resource Center.
3. Provide 100% affordable housing at Ashby BART for extremely low-, very low-, and low-income people and include family-sized units.
4. Dedicate one-third of Berkeley's Housing Trust Fund to South Berkeley, with at least a minimum of \$50 million over 10 years.

You can find more information at www.cityofberkeley.info/Community_Advisory_Group
Both groups are asking for your help and support. If you have missed earlier meetings, it's very important and not too late to weigh in with your opinion by sending an e-mail to the following: bartplanning@cityofberkeley.info with copies to mayor@cityofberkeley.info and council@cityofberkeley.info.

MOST IMPORTANT TO DO NOW

The City of Berkeley and BART are preparing zoning standards for both the North and South Stations. An Interactive Workshop on Zoning to get public input will be held Monday, **August 31, 2020, at 6:00 pm**. You can participate by calling

1-699 900-6833 or 1-888 475-4499
Meeting ID: 944 6444 6137 Password: 638245

Get Zoom tv link from contacting: bartplanning@cityofberkeley.info. See/hear you there!



A New Volleyball Complex for the Clark Kerr Campus:

This project involves construction of four new beach volleyball courts, a support building, new lighting and scoreboard, a public address system, and a lawn area for spectators. The two existing courts are not in compliance with Title IX which requires equal sports facilities/programs for men and women. The new facility would be primarily used by female students who participate in the Women's Intercollegiate Athletics Beach Volleyball program. A

part of the project is the partial demolition of Building 21 which has not been occupied since 1979 due to seismic issues.

The Berkeley campus is preparing an Environment Impact Report (EIR) and will host a virtual meeting to receive public comments on the scope of the EIR at 5:30 to 7:00 pm on Monday, August 24, 2020. To participate in this online public session, you are asked to submit your comments **no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, August 24, 2020.**

Send comments via email to planning@berkeley.edu, with: 1) Your first and last name, and 2) Write in your email that "I grant permission to UC Berkeley to read my comments aloud" as part of the online public session. While all comments received will be included in the public record, if you want yours read aloud, submit a condensed version that is no more than 500 words. If there are a lot of comments received, comments read aloud may be limited to no more than two minutes.

The **deadline for all public comments** and guidance on the scope and content of the EIR is **no later than 5:00 pm, September 7, 2020.** They can be sent by email to planning@berkeley.edu or by regular mail to Shradha Navalli Patil, Senior Planner, Physical & Environmental Planning, University of California, Berkeley, 300 A&E Building, Berkeley, CA 94720-1382. You are asked to include "Clark Kerr Campus Beach Volleyball Complex EIR" as the subject. For more information about the project call (510) 495-5786 or email planning@berkeley.edu.



Wildfires, Then and Now

With wildfires currently devastating areas in each of the eight out of the nine Bay Area counties, there can be no question that wildfires have become more intense and occur more frequently, not just in the traditional fall months.

Our City has two designated High-Risk Fire Zones, one being Panoramic Hill, the other being the North and South Berkeley hill areas. However, the risk is not confined to just those areas. When there is a combination of high temperature, low humidity and high winds blowing from the east, experts warn that our whole City could be destroyed in a short time. The danger increases when there are droughts and dried out vegetation literally adds fuel to the fire. That's what we are facing now and, in the months, to come.

Throughout the hill area there are many streets where the street width (less than 26 feet) interferes with fire engines responding to any kind of emergency. People park on these streets and increase the danger. This problem has been documented for at least 40 years, yet only some of these narrow streets have had street parking restricted.

What's going on around us now is a wake-up call that the time has come for ALL cities, especially ours, to get busy and take the steps that are necessary to protect lives and preserve homes. To become more informed, you might want to take a look at the National Geographic film, *Rebuilding Paradise*, directed by Ron Howard. It tells the story of Paradise, California - the site of California's worst fire to date, which killed 85 people, displaced 50,000 and destroyed

95% of local structures. You can watch a trailer of the film at the link below. To watch the whole film, scroll down to "Screenings." Put in USA, Ca and use the pull down menu for the Rialto Theater, Elmwood. Go all the way to the end. The cost to see the whole film is \$12, for a three-day rental. Link to the film: <https://films.nationalgeographic.com/rebuilding-paradise>
Here are some news articles from the LA Times for those of you who might want to dig deeper.

<https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-camp-fire-deathtrap-20181230-story.html>

<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-paradise-survivors-20181202-htlstory.html>

<https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-camp-fire-tictoc-20181118-story.html>



Joint Sub-Committee for Implementation of State Housing Laws (JSISHL):

Readers will remember this subject from an earlier article. We've included the topic here because the process that the City of Berkeley has long relied upon to balance the impacts of new development on existing properties is significantly changing. Under State law, cities must adopt objective standards and when certain new development that are likely to be large meets those standards, then permits may be issued over the counter without public review.

To lead the effort to determine what Berkeley's objective standards should be, the City Council established the JSISHL with nine members with each member appointed by a Council member. In late July, the sub-committee took two significant actions affecting low-rise residential neighborhoods that would be adjacent to or nearby proposed high rise residential-commercial projects that are frequently proposed along commercial streets such as University, San Pablo, Telegraph, Shattuck, College and Solano Avenues. The actions rejected proposals by sub-committee member Wrenn and supported by BNC to:

1. use such measures as the number of dwelling units per acre or others which would limit the density of proposed new projects; and
2. prevent shadowing of residential solar panels and public open spaces such as parks and schoolyards that would be affected.

The wording of the proposal that was approved by the JSISHL is far too complicated to include in this outline, but readers can check out the article posted on our Berkeley Neighborhoods Council website.

We are advised that the actions by the JSISHL will be presented to the Council possibly in September and that the Council will likely refer them to the Design Review Committee and the Planning Commission before action is final. There will be opportunity for public comment at each step, so keep tuned to BNC for any further meetings.

This is a big one because should the JSISHL recommendations be adopted, there will be no local control over the development of many large projects.



That's all for now but stay tuned for Part 2 coming soon! Just to let you know, It's all about the election.