BNC Chat May 13 2023

00:28:43 Paola Laverde: Elmwood - we must save our last theater in Berkeley.

00:30:03 kelly hammargren: looks like all that is left is drinking

00:30:36 Christopher Kroll: And pizza by the slice!

00:32:32 Toni Mester: No joy in Mudville, the mighty Warriors struck out.

00:33:25 Paola Laverde: I love the Back Room.

00:34:29 Ayanna Davis Healthy Black Fam: @Paola. Looks like a great venue!

00:34:45 kelly hammargren: We’re building like crazy in the downtown, how will this impact noise for people living downtown who want to sleep

00:35:01 Paola Laverde: It is. Very intimate and always brings great performers… well, before the pandemic.

00:35:10 Meryl / West Berkeley: The noise is already amped up in the city.

00:35:38 Christopher Kroll: Everyone living downtown will be under 25 — so no need to worry about sleeping

00:43:16 Carla Woodworth, Parker Street: Years ago there were problems with the Rose Garden Inn (Telegraph & Stuart) because they were throwing large weddings and parties--impacting the neighborhood because of the scale of the events.

00:44:07 Paola Laverde: Thank you, Kelly for bringing this up!

00:44:59 Negeene Mosaed: Movie theaters are coming back

00:45:20 Negeene Mosaed: My son had to go to Richmond to see movie last night it’s a shame

00:50:42 Ayanna Davis Healthy Black Fam: My son goes to Grand Lake, downtown Oakland and Bay Street, and my teenage grandson and his friends take BART to San Leandro and Concord to see movies.

00:51:01 Meryl / West Berkeley: That’s true. Ayanna!

00:51:49 Ayanna Davis Healthy Black Fam: Letting go of the theaters is a big miss for the City of Berkeley.

00:51:53 Paola Laverde: I refuse to go to Bay Street street, it is SO expensive. 😆

00:52:35 Ayanna Davis Healthy Black Fam: @Paola. Yes they are waaay too expensive.

00:53:04 Paola Laverde: Great question Toni! The rent is TOO damn high!

00:53:41 Paola Laverde: @

00:54:08 Carla Woodworth, Parker Street: The market rate buildings have empty first floor spaces because only banks or expensive gyms can afford the high rents.

00:54:51 Paola Laverde: Berkeley Scanner is a fear mongering rag.

00:56:10 Christopher Kroll: What about a commercial version of Measure M to charge landlords for vacant commercial spaces?

00:56:48 Ayanna Davis Healthy Black Fam: We need to make sure that community benefits and needs are included in the San Pablo Avenue corridor.

00:57:17 Margot Smith: What about fire evacuation routes?

00:57:19 Christopher Kroll: The City Council does not seem to care about community benefits. Not sure why?

00:57:19 Ayanna Davis Healthy Black Fam: Replying to "Berkeley Scanner is ..."

So true.

00:57:52 Ayanna Davis Healthy Black Fam: Replying to "What about a commerc..."

Christopher, that is a great idea.

00:59:28 Ayanna Davis Healthy Black Fam: Replying to "The City Council doe..."

Because we let them get away with it. We have to advocate for them and hold planning, the city council, and the city manager accountable to the policies, rules, and laws.

00:59:56 Toni Mester: Replying to "Berkeley Scanner is ..."

That comments makes me want to subscribe.

01:00:43 Christopher Kroll: Replying to "The City Council doe..."

Yes you are right.

01:04:27 Paola Laverde: Good question, Carol!

01:05:01 Margot Smith: Shirley, did my housing data help?

01:06:31 Meryl / West Berkeley: I have heard this from other small businesses on SPA.

01:07:01 Meryl / West Berkeley: Thanks Ngeen.

01:07:42 Paola Laverde: Thank you, Negeene!

01:07:46 Toni Mester: Well said Negeene. Hang in there.

01:09:36 Carla Woodworth, Parker Street: The Pacific Film Archive is the last theatre in the downtown--located in BAMFA.

01:09:47 Christopher Kroll: Landmark was serving alcohol at the Shattuck

01:09:52 Meryl / West Berkeley: yes.

01:10:24 Carla Woodworth, Parker Street: No you didn't--we were allowed to take drinks into the Shattuck.

01:10:37 Christopher Kroll: Yes big old parking garage in Center Street

01:11:12 michellelepaule: The downtown garage has a flat rate of $9. Too much for many people.

01:11:26 Meryl / West Berkeley: That’s a lot Michelle.

01:11:54 Christopher Kroll: Yes that is a lot of money

01:11:56 Negeene Mosaed: Because the RENTS ARE TOO HIGH

01:12:02 Negeene Mosaed: RETAIL CANT DO IT

01:12:10 Negeene Mosaed: LAKKIREDDI

01:12:41 Negeene Mosaed: THESE ARE THE OWNERS WHO WILL NOT DROP RENTS DESPITE EMTY

01:12:50 Negeene Mosaed: EMPTY STORE FRONTS

01:13:35 Negeene Mosaed: THE LANDLORDS ARE SUPPORTED

01:13:40 Christopher Kroll: Can Keiron come back in the future as this is developed?

01:13:41 Toni Mester: Some public action like picketing high rent commercial spaces might draw attention to the problem.

01:14:00 Meryl / West Berkeley: That’s a good idea Toni,

01:15:03 Negeene Mosaed: Reacted to "Some public action l…" with 👌

01:15:47 Paola Laverde: Here’s that article:

01:15:49 Paola Laverde: https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/housing-towers-downtown-berkeley-17816182.php

01:16:51 Kieron Slaughter: Replying to "Can Keiron come back..."

Yes, Once approved, maybe I can come back in a year to discuss the results

01:17:10 Christopher Kroll: Replying to "Can Keiron come back..."

Thanks for you presentation today

01:17:50 Toni Mester: Replying to "Can Keiron come back..."

Excellent presentation KS

01:17:58 Janis Ching - BNC: Replying to "Can Keiron come back..."

That would be great, let's stay in touch

01:18:12 Kieron Slaughter: Replying to "Can Keiron come back..."

Thanks! I went a bit fast because I wanted to provide ample time for questions

01:18:24 Kieron Slaughter: Reacted to "Thanks for you prese..." with 👍

01:18:26 Carole Marasovic: Negeene, can you either make public comment to the Commission on the Status of Women this Wednesday or alternatively, write a letter (comment would be better) on the challenges for women-owned businesses? This item is on our agenda this Wednesday (although it is a very full agenda). Your comment would be informative/helpful towards developing a policy recommendation to Council.

01:18:28 Kieron Slaughter: Reacted to "Excellent presentati..." with 👍

01:21:08 Ayanna Davis Healthy Black Fam: OMG!!!

01:21:12 Margot Smith: I’m concerned about how much water sewage and electricity the big buildings will use.

01:21:26 Christopher Kroll: One of the problems with these new buildings is they evict existing businesses, construct new buildings with ground floor commercial spaces which never get tenants. It is the gradual ghost towning of Berkeley. What happens to the small businesses that get evicted? They don’t come back.

01:23:18 Toni Mester: The Trachtenberg style tends toward the industrial while Berkeley’s old style is Art Deco.

01:23:43 Kieron Slaughter: Replying to "One of the problems ..."

I appreciate your point Chris. However, most of our new mixed-use developments are replacing old auto related uses that didn't have any small businesses. When existing businesses are in place, they don't evict them, they don't renew their lease.

01:24:33 Kieron Slaughter: Thanks again BNC. Here's a link to our homepage where you can sign up for our newsletter to keep up with what we're up to. https://berkeleyca.gov/doing-business/operating-berkeley/business-assistance

01:24:56 Janis Ching - BNC: Reacted to "Thanks again BNC. He..." with 👍

01:25:09 Christopher Kroll: Replying to "One of the problems ..."

Thanks Kieron. I’m thinking more of downtown I guess

01:25:35 Margot Smith: What about the Turner Institute undermining the downtown plan?

01:26:11 Christopher Kroll: What are the “community benefits” we are getting for all this major building downtown?

01:26:41 Carla Woodworth, Parker Street: If you are interested in the statewide initiative, Our Neighborhood Voices, please contact me. We are planning a Zoom call for the end of May. carla@tennypress.com

01:26:41 Kieron Slaughter: Replying to "One of the problems ..."

I see. We definitely expect all of our core downtown commercial spaces to have tenants shortly after opening. The Moderna building retail spaces are already leased up.

01:28:32 Carole Marasovic: Movie theatres are down but axe throwing is up. What is the significance of that?

01:28:45 Paola Laverde: Reacted to "Movie theatres are d..." with 😆

01:29:06 Kieron Slaughter: Replying to "Movie theatres are d..."

People are watching movies at home but hopefully not throwing axes in their living room!

01:30:13 Paola Laverde: Replying to "Movie theatres are d..."

😆

01:30:28 Carla Woodworth, Parker Street: And now we have slabs....

01:31:41 Carole Marasovic: "Buildings of unusual size"-Another term to add to the Berkeley glossary.

01:32:48 Paola Laverde: The city says you don’t have to add affordable housing, just pay the mitigation fee, a fee the CMs are keeping low so they don’t have to provide affordable units.

01:33:14 Carla Woodworth, Parker Street: State Senator Scott Wiener should be here to answer our questions.

01:33:34 Christopher Kroll: “Some percentage of affordable units”. That is a problem. It should be a certain % not just 3 or 10 un its out of 200

01:35:02 Paola Laverde: The fee goes to the city to pay for affordable housing, yet the CMs are keeping the fee low for developers, so the funds coming into the city are a lot for affordable housing.

01:35:19 Christopher Kroll: Why does Berkeley need to zone for 5000 units above RHNA 9000?

01:35:24 Paola Laverde: …not a lot for affordable housing

01:35:36 Carla Woodworth, Parker Street: Gentrification on steroids.

01:35:57 Meryl / West Berkeley: I am dismayed about the non-democratic, autocratic top down discussion here. It sounds like a theocracy, not a democracy. It is alarming to hear also how the state has overspent and people have left the state in (but hard to find the numbers).

01:36:11 kelly hammargren: yes gentrification just like in the book Sick City

01:36:28 kelly hammargren: these buildings require more energy to operate

01:37:04 Meryl / West Berkeley: We know the huge changes in capitalism over the past 30-40 years have got us in the mess that we are in. And we still continue to be lap dogs for big politics and developers.

01:37:09 Christopher Kroll: So how many more 20+ towers downtown?

01:37:49 Toni Mester: Replying to "Movie theatres are d..."

It’s the dawn of the ax-throwing era in Berkeley politics. Let it rip.

01:37:51 Christopher Kroll: Yes Kelly it is not about addressing the climate emergency

01:38:24 Carla Woodworth, Parker Street: & when an electric scooter bursts into flame in one of these buildings--how will the residents get out of their tower?

01:38:33 Meryl / West Berkeley: The climate emergency is the ideology and rhetoric that has dressed this up. Study history and the rise of autocracies.

01:39:16 Christopher Kroll: squeeze it and shape it up!

01:39:38 Meryl / West Berkeley: “Cost effective” but not for the people in the democracy.

01:40:15 Carla Woodworth, Parker Street: Our only hope is a statewide initiative. Please join me in co-sponsoring a community Zoom call at the end of May.

01:40:24 Christopher Kroll: What does design review do actually? Yuck!

01:40:32 Paola Laverde: California - All for students, nothing for families

01:40:37 Carole Marasovic: 4-5 million $ does not go as far as it used to in HTF monies to fund construction of sufficient needed affordable units.

01:41:18 Christopher Kroll: Yes Carla — just concrete slabs

01:47:54 Carla Woodworth, Parker Street: Toni is correct--Berkeley tenements!

01:49:11 Meryl / West Berkeley: The tenements are only in some parts of the city.

01:49:29 Meryl / West Berkeley: Carefully chosen parts.

01:51:22 Christopher Kroll: What is CW?

01:52:22 Toni Mester: Commercial West: San Pablo Avenue and lower University.

01:52:47 Christopher Kroll: Thank you Toni

01:55:06 Carole Marasovic: I asked the presenter for the developer at a meeting about GLAs escaping required number of BMR units. His answer was he agreed that the City should require it but I cannot expect the developer to not take advantage of an exception that the City has allowed. Thus, those units only come up in the context of density bonus standards with GLAs.

01:55:49 Paola Laverde: Reacted to "Commercial West: San..." with 👍🏼

01:55:55 Paola Laverde: Reacted to "Thank you Toni" with 👍🏼

01:56:00 Carla Woodworth: The city commissions are just rubber stamps for the developers.

01:56:07 Toni Mester: Carole I would like to hear more about that meeting some time.

01:56:23 Meryl / West Berkeley: The street scape will be dark.

01:56:34 Meryl / West Berkeley: That is one reason downtowns are dying (SF)

01:58:27 Carla Woodworth: Add to Paola's question: Are the needs for the Fire Department being considered?

01:59:10 Ayanna Davis Healthy Black Fam: What about impact?

01:59:32 Margot Smith: What about water usage?

01:59:46 Ayanna Davis Healthy Black Fam: Has there been environmental impact reports?

01:59:53 Meryl / West Berkeley: Maintaining the storm drains is expensive and sewage running into the bay this year again.

01:59:54 Paola Laverde: Thanks Janis!

02:00:36 Paola Laverde: There’s a assembly bill to limit the escape stairs to one instead of two.

02:00:48 Paola Laverde: That way, more units can be built.

02:00:51 Meryl / West Berkeley: That is very scary Paola!

02:01:00 Carla Woodworth: Tenants were jumping out of a building by UCSF just this week--because of a batter/scooter fire.

02:03:48 Christopher Kroll: What is status of City’s ODS? When will they be created and adopted???

02:03:50 Toni Mester: Chris, we need to wiggle in whatever wiggle room the state allows until we can stop the state from destroying local control.

02:06:31 Toni Mester: 1598 UA was changed a little, the step downs on the south side were improved.

02:07:07 Janis Ching - BNC: Thanks for that clarification, Toni, that is true.

02:11:07 Meryl / West Berkeley: Not just no windows, but windows that are small. I mentioned that 2147 looked like a prison. Design Review made recommendations to widen the windows.

02:11:13 Toni Mester: Steve, thanks for your generosity in spending the morning with us and for all the shared information and ideas.

02:11:59 Carla Woodworth: I was at the ZAB--Kelly is correct--actual bedrooms without windows. Could you let BNC know if that is the new code?

02:13:24 Carole Marasovic: The lack of Building Code compliance with windows is an excellent point, Kelly. Thanks for monitoring these buildings.

02:13:34 Meryl / West Berkeley: This is the neoliberal approach to everything.

02:14:20 Paola Laverde: Yes, thank you, Kelly for keeping an eye on those buildings!

02:14:50 Meryl / West Berkeley: What is the vision for California?

02:15:10 Toni Mester: Where there is no vision, the people perish, but they who follow the law, happy are they. (proverbs)

02:15:13 Meryl / West Berkeley: Berkeley cannot be Tokyo.

02:15:25 Meryl / West Berkeley: Thanks Toni.

02:16:01 Toni Mester: It’s HONG KONG by the Bay.

02:16:10 Meryl / West Berkeley: Scary Toni.

02:17:25 Carla Woodworth: Berkeley has become Houston.

02:17:59 Christopher Kroll: “Does it pencil out?” is the only planning/design question

02:18:07 Meryl / West Berkeley: I want to remind everyone that the pollution from building the huge buildings is horrible. I had the unfortunate experience of walking on Oxford and even a mask could not mask the pollution raining down on pedestrians.

02:18:07 Carole Marasovic: Thank you, Kiernon and Steve for attending BNC, sharing information and hearing feedback that the community wants a partnership with the City on planning development. Development.

02:20:14 Paola Laverde: Thank you Steven!