



## Revised ODS adopted, next steps for the project at North Berkeley BART

Dear friend,

Last night the City Council voted 8-0 (Harrison abstained) to **approve the Objective Design Standards as revised by the Planning Commission**. There was strong and clear testimony against that from about 15 people allied with NBNA's goals, and many, many of you sent impassioned emails to Council beforehand (the ones that were copied to us were great). But at the end of the day, the developers' last-minute request for "more flexibility" was granted.

We want to give **special kudos to Kate Harrison** for grilling the developers about their claims and comments, and for advancing a proposal that would have restricted some of the changes to just the affordable housing buildings – **and to Sophie Hahn and Susan Wengraf** for supporting that amendment, which failed on a 6-3 vote.

### THE GOOD . . . AND THE NOT GOOD

It's worth pointing out that **both Kate and Sophie are running for mayor** (see links below) and both have been **very supportive over the years of NBNA's goals** for balanced development. Their record is distinct from the other Councilmember running for mayor, **Rigel Robinson, whose positions have been uniformly aligned with the YIMBY dogma of build massively, regardless of community context and impact**. Despite much earlier statements to us of supporting a smaller 600 unit project, Mayor Arreguin over the past year has supported a large project, and simply voted to approve the ODS without comment.

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## **Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani and BART director Rebecca**

**Salzman** both lauded the current project proposal as a triumph of community consensus - but as testimony at the hearing pointed out, **they are deeply wrong, and this project is anything but "a triumph of consensus"**. The over 1,000 households allied with NBNA have for years consistently called for a slightly smaller project that would fit well into the neighborhood. We've remained opposed to the fortress project that BART, the City and the developers have forced upon us. **Kesarwani, our councilperson, once again ignored us and our requests for a project that respected the surrounding community as called for in the agreements between the City and BART. Shame on Kesarwani and Salzman for their distortions and misrepresentations.**

## **WHAT'S NEXT?**

The next step in this project will be the presentation of the **actual project proposal, likely in January**. There is no public decision point, as the BART Board is the sole decision maker and we do not expect them to be open to community input (which has been their pattern).

Kate Harrison has said she will call for **close review of the project's compliance with the ODS** when it comes time for the City to strike an official agreement with the developers for the City's affordable housing funding (\$23 million, a very large portion of the City's available funding) – that may offer some options for public engagement.

**Development projects are unpredictable** and this one will be no exception – **we should all stay tuned for opportunities** that emerge to shape what actually gets built at North Berkeley.

## **OUR IMPACT**

**Thank you so much for all your engagement** – we wish we had better news

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for you, but we hold out hope for the project being somewhat better than we expect, when we see the proposal in January.

Our huge engagement over the past couple years (over 1,000 emails, hundreds participating in public meetings, scores testifying over and over, and more) **had some real impact**. The zoning remained at 7 stories, instead of the YIMBY-pushed 12-story+ approach, the developers are making modest efforts at designs that could relate to the surrounding area, and the current proposal (see image below) pulls back some from its earlier excesses.

In particular, you should know that all of the **community input at the ODS meetings over the past 4 months also made a real difference**. The project design/height at the edges was reduced to 3 (instead of 4) story buildings fronting the project on Acton and Virginia as well as a reduction in height along the northeast corner of the project (unfortunately, there's now a much larger and likely blank building front along Sacramento, now enabled by the Planning Commission's ODS changes). So, a big thank you to all who attended those lengthy ODS community input meetings!

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## LAST WORDS TODAY

In closing, **we encourage you to support Kate Harrison and Sophie Hahn for mayor** (ranked choice voting, choose them as your top 2), and based on this experience **we cannot recommend support for Mayor Arreguin for the State Senate seat**. We also encourage you to connect with the **Our Neighborhood Voices initiative**, which would roll back Sacramento preemption of local land-use authority, and the Berkeley Together organization.

**We'll be in touch** at the next step - best wishes for the holidays and **thanks so much!**

## **NBNA**

### ACTUAL WEB LINKS:

<https://electkateharrison.com/>

<https://www.sophie4mayor.com/>

<https://ourneighborhoodvoices.com/>

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