



Office of the City Manager

INFORMATION CALENDAR
January 20, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager
 Submitted by: Jordan Klein, Director, Planning and Development Department
 Subject: Landmark Preservation Ordinance Notice of Decision: 1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way /#LMIN2025-0002

INTRODUCTION

The attached Landmarks Preservation Commission Notice of Decision (NOD) is presented to the Mayor and City Council pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code/Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (BMC/LPO) Section 3.24.160, which requires that “a copy of the Notice of Decision shall be filed with the City Clerk and the City Clerk shall present said copy to the City Council at its next regular meeting.”

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC/Commission) has designated the subject property as a Landmark. This action is subject to a 15-day appeal period, which began after the notice was mailed on January 5, 2026.

BACKGROUND

BMC/LPO Section 3.24.190 allows the Council to review any action of the Commission in granting or denying Landmark, Structure of Merit, or Historic District status. For Council to review the decision on its merits, Council must appeal the Notice of Decision. To do so, a Council member must move this Information Item to Action and then move to set the matter for hearing on its own. Such action must be taken within 15 days of the mailing of the Notice of Decision, or by January 20, 2026. Such certification to Council shall stay all proceedings in the same manner as the filing of an appeal.

If the Council chooses to appeal the action of the Commission, then a public hearing will be set. The Council must then rule on the designation within 30 days of closing the hearing, otherwise the decision of the Commission is automatically deemed affirmed.

Unless the Council wishes to review the determination of the Commission and make its own decision, the attached NOD is deemed received and filed.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE IMPACTS

Landmark designation and discretionary alteration reviews by staff and LPC provide opportunities for the adaptive re-use and rehabilitation of historic resources within the City. The rehabilitation of these resources, rather than their removal, achieves construction and demolition waste diversion, and promotes investment in existing urban centers.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

The Council may choose to appeal the decision, in which case it would conduct a public hearing at a future date.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

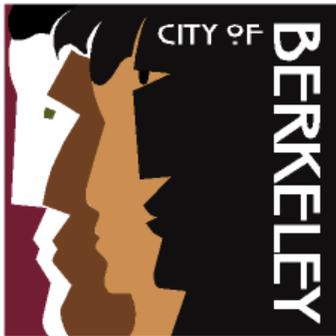
There are no known fiscal impacts associated with this action.

CONTACT PERSON

Marytonae Sanchez, Assistant Planner, Planning and Development, 510-981-7419

Attachments:

1: Notice of Decision – #LMIN2025-0002/1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way



L A N D M A R K S
P R E S E R V A T I O N
C O M M I S S I O N

N o t i c e o f D e c i s i o n

DATE OF BOARD DECISION: November 6, 2025
DATE NOTICE MAILED: January 5, 2026
APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION: January 20, 2026
EFFECTIVE DATE (Barring Appeal or Certification): January 21, 2026¹

1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way – The KPFA Radio Building

Landmark application #LMIN2025-0002 for the consideration of City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation status for a commercial building constructed in 1991 (APN: 057-2059-013-01).

The Landmarks Preservation Commission of the City of Berkeley, after conducting a public hearing, **APPROVED** the following designation:

- **City Landmark Designation**
 - **Applicant:**
 - Carol Wolfley
2713 Ellsworth Street
Berkeley, CA 94702
 - Candice Schott
1420 Kains Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94702
 - **Property Owner:** Stephanie Wells, Executive Director
The Pacifica Foundation Inc.

¹ Pursuant to BMC Chapter 3.24, the City Council may “certify” any decision of the LPC for review, which has the same effect as an appeal. In most cases, the Council must certify the LPC decision during the 15-day appeal period. However, pursuant to BMC Section 1.04.070, if any portion of the appeal period falls within a Council recess, the deadline for Council certification is suspended until the first Council meeting after the recess, plus the number of days of the appeal period that occurred during the recess, minus one day. If there is no appeal or certification, the Use Permit becomes effective the day after the certification deadline has passed.

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
NOTICE OF DECISION
#LMIN2025-0002
1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Mailed: January 5, 2026
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1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Berkeley, CA 94704

ZONING DISTRICT: Downtown Mixed-Use District (C-DMU)

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS: The project is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to the Class 8 exemption for “actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves the procedures for protection of the environment.” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 “Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment.”)

Here, the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (BMC 3.24) is a local ordinance to ensure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, and/or protection of historic structures, which are part of the environment under CEQA. (See Pub. Res. Code § 21084.1.)

None of the exceptions to this exemption apply here: (1) this Project is not exempt under Class 3, 4, 5, 6, or 11, so the location exception does not apply; (2) this Project does not involve cumulative impacts from successive projects of the same type in the same place; (3) there is not a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances; (4) the Project will not result in damage to scenic resources; and (5) the Project is not located on a site which is included on a list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. (See CEQA Guidelines 15300.2.)

The application materials for this project is available online at:

<https://berkeleyca.gov/construction-development/land-use-development/zoning-projects> or
<https://aca-prod.accela.com/BERKELEY/Default.aspx>

FINDINGS AND APPLICATION MATERIALS ARE ATTACHED TO THIS NOTICE

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
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COMMISSION VOTE: 6-0-0-0

YES: CRANDALL, FINACOM, ORBUCH, SCHWARTZ, LEUSCHNER,
MONTGOMERY

NO: NONE

ABSTAIN: NONE

ABSENT: NONE

TO APPEAL THIS DECISION (see Section 3.24.300 of the Berkeley Municipal Code):

To appeal a decision of the Landmarks Preservation Commission to the City Council you must:

1. Submit a letter clearly and concisely setting forth the grounds for the appeal to the City Clerk, located at 2180 Milvia Street, 1st Floor, Berkeley. The City Clerk's telephone number is (510) 981-6900.
 - a. Pursuant to BMC Section 3.24.300.A, an appeal may be taken to the City Council by the application of the owners of the property or their authorized agents, or by the application of at least fifty residents of the City aggrieved or affected by any determination of the commission made under the provisions of Chapter 3.24.
2. Submit the required fee (checks and money orders must be payable to 'City of Berkeley'):
 - a. The basic fee for persons other than the applicant is \$3,000. This fee may be reduced to \$1,000 if the appeal is signed by persons who lease or own at least 50 percent of the parcels or dwelling units within 300 feet of the project site, or at least 25 such persons (not including dependent children), whichever is less. Signatures collected per the filing requirement in BMC Section 3.24.300.A may be counted towards qualifying for the reduced fee, so long as the signers are qualified. The individual filing the appeal must clearly denote which signatures are to be counted towards qualifying for the reduced fee.
 - b. The fee for all appeals by Applicants is \$6,000.
3. The appeal must be received prior to 5:00 p.m. on the "APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION" date shown above (if the close of the appeal period falls on a weekend or holiday, then the appeal period expires the following business day).

If no appeal is received, the Landmarking will be final on the first business day following expiration of the appeal period.

NOTICE CONCERNING YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS:

If you object to this decision, the following requirements and restrictions apply:

1. If you challenge this decision in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the Landmarks Preservation Commission at, or prior to, the public hearing.

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
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2. You must appeal to the City Council within fifteen (15) days after the Notice of Decision of the action of the Landmarks Preservation Commission is mailed. It is your obligation to notify the Land Use Planning Division in writing of your desire to receive a Notice of Decision when it is completed.
3. Pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6(b) and Government Code Section 65009(c)(1), no lawsuit challenging a City Council decision, as defined by Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6(e), regarding a use permit, variance or other permit may be filed more than ninety (90) days after the date the decision becomes final, as defined in Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6(b). Any lawsuit not filed within that ninety (90) day period will be barred.
4. Pursuant to Government Code Section 66020(d)(1), notice is hereby given to the applicant that the 90-day protest period for any fees, dedications, reservations, or other exactions included in any permit approval begins upon final action by the City, and that any challenge must be filed within this 90-day period.
5. If you believe that this decision or any condition attached to it denies you any reasonable economic use of the subject property, was not sufficiently related to a legitimate public purpose, was not sufficiently proportional to any impact of the project, or for any other reason constitutes a "taking" of property for public use without just compensation under the California or United States Constitutions, your appeal of this decision must include the following information:
 - A. That this belief is a basis of your appeal.
 - B. Why you believe that the decision or condition constitutes a "taking" of property as set forth above.
 - C. All evidence and argument in support of your belief that the decision or condition constitutes a "taking" as set forth above.

If you do not do so, you will waive any legal right to claim that your property has been taken, both before the City Council and in court.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Communications to Berkeley boards, commissions or committees are public record and will become part of the City's electronic records, which are accessible through the City's website. **Please note: e-mail addresses, names, addresses, and other contact information are not required, but if included in any communication to a City board, commission or committee, will become part of the public record.** If you do not want your e-mail address or any other contact information to be made public, you may deliver communications via U.S. Postal Service or in person to the secretary of the relevant board, commission or committee. If you do not want your contact information included in the public record, please do not include that information in your communication. Please contact the secretary to the relevant board, commission or committee for further information.

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
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FURTHER INFORMATION:

Questions about the project should be directed to the project planner, Marytonae Sanchez, at (510) 981-7419 or msanchez@berkeleyca.gov. All project application materials may be viewed at the Permit Service Center (Zoning counter), 1947 Center Street, 3rd Fl., during regular business hours.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Findings for Approval
2. Application Materials

ATTEST:



Allison Riemer, Secretary

Landmarks Preservation Commission

cc: City Clerk

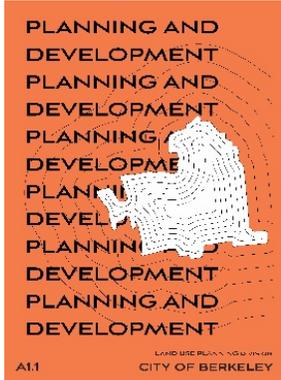
Stephanie Wells, Executive Director of The Pacifica Foundation Inc., 1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Berkeley, CA 94704

Landmarks Preservation Commission Findings for Designation

1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way (KPFA Radio Building)

November 6, 2025

Landmark Initiation – #LMIN2025-0002



Quick Facts	Project Description:
<p>Initiated by: 50 Berkeley resident petitioners</p> <p>Application Author: Carol Wolfley</p> <p>Property Owner: Pacifica Foundation Inc., represented by Maria Negret</p> <p>Project Address: 1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way</p> <p>GP Land Use: Downtown</p> <p>Zoning: Downtown Mixed-Use (C-DMU) District</p> <p>Historic District: N/A</p> <p>CEQA: Categorically exempt, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 "Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment."</p> <p>Submittal Date: April 2, 2025</p> <p>Date Deemed Complete: August 20, 2025</p> <p>Project Planner: Marytonae Sanchez</p>	<p>The applicant is seeking consideration of City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation for a commercial building constructed in 1991 (APN: 057-2059-013-01).</p>
	Permits Requested:
	<p>Landmark or Structure of Merit Designation. To designate a property as a City Landmark or Structure of Merit, pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Section 3.24.110.</p>
	Staff Recommendation:
	<p>Staff recommends that LPC:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receive public testimony and close the hearing on this matter. 2. Consider the extent to which the property meets the criteria for local designation under BMC Section 3.24.110. 3. Make findings as deemed appropriate for final action.

CEQA FINDINGS

The project is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to the Class 8 exemption for “actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves the procedures for protection of the environment.” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 “Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment.”)

Here, the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (BMC 3.24) is a local ordinance to ensure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, and/or protection of historic structures, which are part of the environment under CEQA. (See Pub. Res. Code § 21084.1.)

None of the exceptions to this exemption apply here: (1) this Project is not exempt under Class 3, 4, 5, 6, or 11, so the location exception does not apply; (2) this Project does not involve cumulative impacts from successive projects of the same type in the same place; (3) there is not a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances; (4) the Project will not result in damage to scenic resources; and (5) the Project is not located on a site which is included on a list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. (See CEQA Guidelines 15300.2.)

LANDMARK PRESERVATION ORDINANCE FINDINGS

1. Pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Section 3.24.110 (A) (2-4) of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO), the Landmarks Preservation Commission of the City of Berkeley (Commission) finds that the property at 1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way meets the criterion for City Landmark designation based on its cultural, educational, and historical value as the home of KPFA Radio for nearly half its life, the first listener-supported radio station in the United States and a pioneer of public broadcasting, its location within the Civic Center core, and one of the few postmodern buildings in Berkeley.

FEATURES TO BE PRESERVED

This designation shall apply to the subject property, and the following distinguishing features of the property shall be preserved, and missing features shall be restored to the extent possible:

- The Martin Luther King Jr. Way façade, including the overall composition, arrangement of architectural features, the balcony, and the broadcast speaker
- The original front glass entry doors, to remain transparent, and the postmodern decorative metal grille above
- The exterior cladding of Heath ceramic tiles
- The skylit interior core, including its spatial configuration and massing
- The overall form and massing of the building
- The embossed “KPFA” and “Pacifica” signage on the exterior
- The scuppers on the north facade

Planning and Development Department Land Use Planning Division

City of Berkeley Ordinance #4694 N.S.

LANDMARK APPLICATION

KPFA RADIO BUILDING

1929 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR WAY
BERKELEY 94704 ALAMEDA COUNTY



Figure 1. KPFA Radio Building facade



Figure 2. KPFA Radio Building 2nd floor

2. Assessor's Parcel Number: 057 205901301 57-2059-13-1

Block and Lot: 2059

Tract: Twitchel

Dimensions: L-shaped - Main Lot: 50' x 124.65', Pkg Area: 53.85' x 35' plus 2 x 10.6

Cross Streets: Berkeley Way and University Ave

3. Is property on the State Historic Resource Inventory? NO

Is property on the Berkeley Urban Conservation Survey? NO

4. Application for Landmark includes:

a. **Building:** YES **Garden:** N/A **Other features:** View of Radio Tower

b. **Landscape and Open Space:** N/A

c. **Historic Site:** NO

d. **District:** NO

e. **Other:** Entire Property

5. Historic Name: KPFA Radio Building

Commonly Known Name: KPFA Radio

6. Date of Construction:

a. **Factual:** 1991 **b. Approximate:**

Source of Information: Architect's website:

<https://trachtenbergarch.com/project/pacifica-radio-kpfa-94-1-fm/>

7. Architect: Denny Abrams, Principal Abrams Millikan and David Trachtenberg Project Architect

8. Builder: Oliver & Company

9. Style: Regional Modernism

10. Original Owners: The Pacifica Foundation Inc. (KPFA Radio)

Original Use: Community radio station

11. Present Owners: The Pacifica Foundation Inc. (KPFA Radio)

12. Present Use: Community radio station and media resource center

Commercial: Office

Institutional: Training center

Other: Radio station

Current Zoning: C-DMU Buffer

Adjacent Property Zoning: C-DMU Buffer

13. Present Condition of Property:

Exterior: Good
Interior: Good
Grounds: Good

Has the property's exterior been altered? NO

14. Description: Built in 1991, the KPFA Radio Building is a two story building that includes state of the art production studios, historic music library, conference rooms, offices, archives, roof garden and support facilities. It is bound by Martin Luther King, Jr. Way on the west, Berkeley Way on the north, Bonita on the east and University Ave on the south.

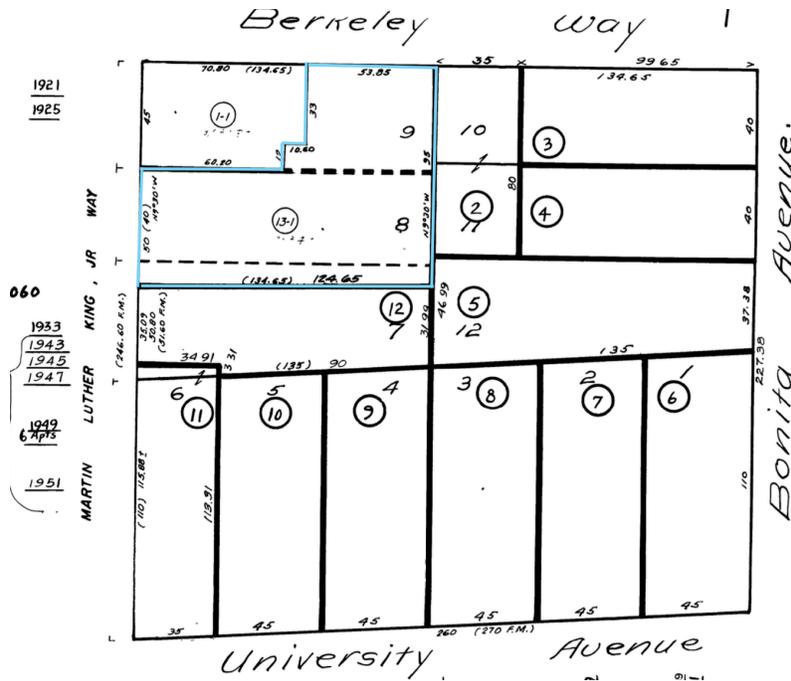


Figure 3. Detail of Assessors Map Block 2059

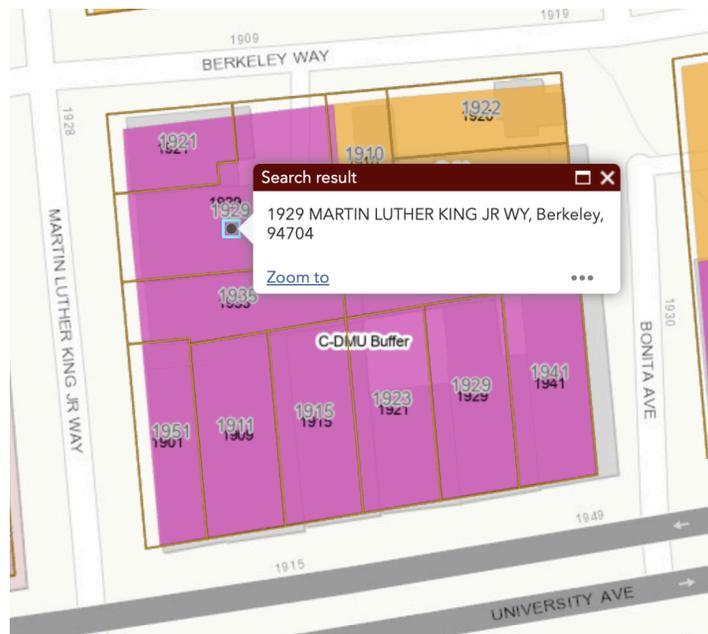


Figure 4. Detail from City of Berkeley zoning map



Figure 5. Detail of Alameda County Parcel Viewer map

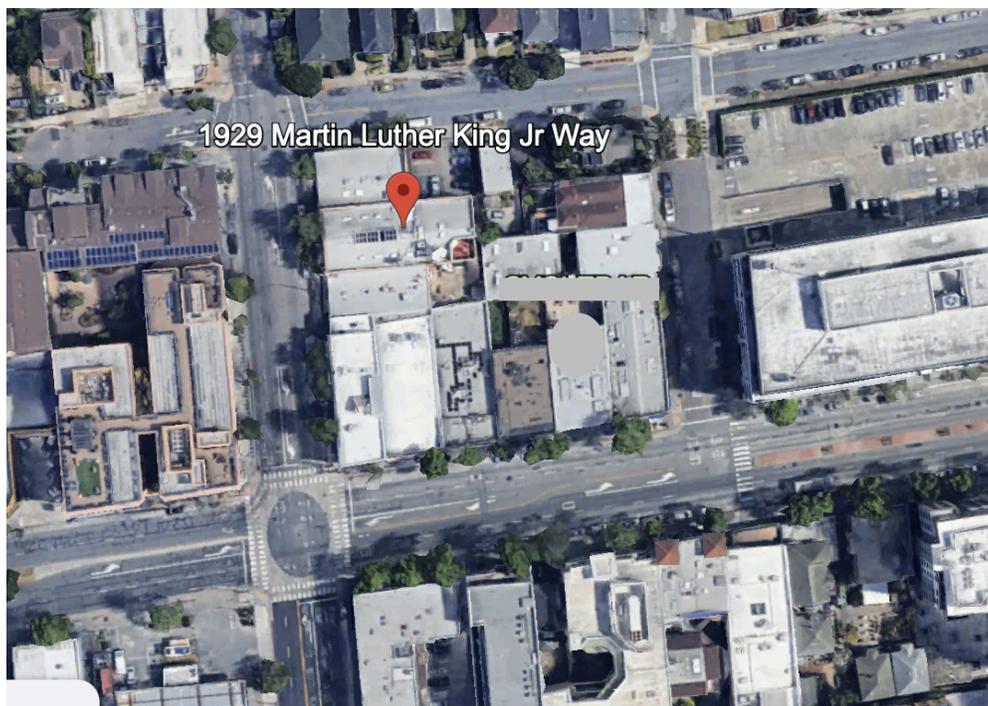


Figure 6. Immediate neighborhood from Google Earth

Features to be preserved

Retractable roof

West Facade facing Martin Luther King, Jr. Way

15. History:

“The Twichell Tract, in which the current KPFA building sits, “was part of Rancho San Antonio, a 44,800-acre Spanish land grant given to Sergeant Luís María Peralta (1759–1851) in 1820 by the last

Spanish governor, Don Pablo Vicente de Sol, in recognition of Peralta's forty years of military service to the Spanish king. The rancho included lands that form Oakland, Alameda, Piedmont, Emeryville, Berkeley, and parts of San Leandro and Albany.

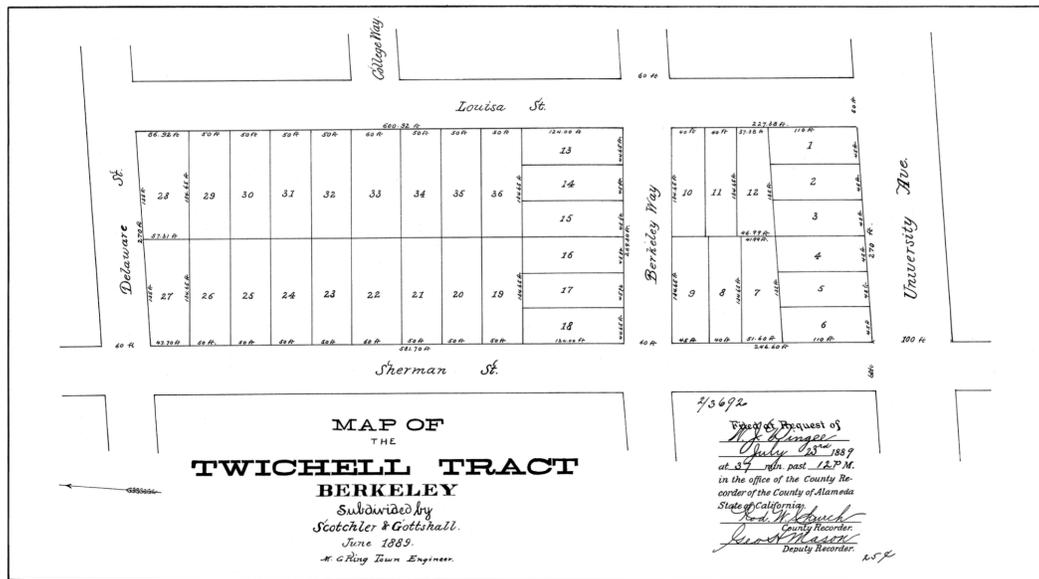


Figure 7. The northern blocks of the Twichell Tract were not subdivided until June 1889. Book 19 page 47

In 1842, Luís Peralta divided the rancho among his four sons. Domingo and José Vicente were given the land that now comprises Oakland and Berkeley.

Within less than a decade, squatters overran the Peraltas' properties, stole their cattle, and sold it in San Francisco. Worse, parcels of ranch land were sold without legal title. Domingo and Vicente Peralta fought the appropriations in the courts. In 1856, the U.S. Supreme Court confirmed their title, but by then the brothers had been forced to sell most of their lands to cover legal costs and taxes. The various buyers engaged cartographer Julius Kellersberger¹ to map the Peralta Ranchos for subdivision purposes.

Plot 79, which contained the future Twichell Tract, was a 160-acre parcel located just north of Francis K. Shattuck's land. Its boundaries were today's M.L. King, Jr. Way to the west, Cedar Street to the north, Arch Street to the east, and Addison Street to the south. Like so much of the Peraltas' lands, Plot 79 was acquired by the French-born, San Francisco-based financier François Louis Alfred Pioche. Pioche apparently sold it to Joshua Hathaway, who died without paying, as one surmises from Pioche's 1857 lawsuit to recover the 160 acres from the Hathaway estate...."

The neighborhood north of University Avenue, between Shattuck Avenue and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way (formerly Grove Street), was mostly farmland during the second half of the 19th century. Subdivision into building lots began in a piecemeal fashion after train service from Oakland to downtown Berkeley was inaugurated in 1876.

The earliest of the four tracts in the area between University Avenue and Delaware Street were the Clapp Tract (1876) and the College Tract (subdivided in 1876, map filed in 1877). Block A of the Twichell Tract was subdivided in 1877, the rest of the tract in 1889. Sea View Park was subdivided in 1890.

With the arrival of electric streetcars in 1891, the area's development received a boost, accelerating as the line was extended from University Avenue to Cedar Street in 1902. By 1911, the neighborhood was almost fully built, and primarily residential.

Included in the architectural mix were Victorian houses built in the earlier years of settlement, but the dominant building style was Colonial Revival, fashionable between 1895 and 1905.



Figure 8. The dilapidated former house of Samuel Heywood, 1929 Grove Street, in 1967. KPFA now occupies the site. (Donogh files, BAHA archives) courtesy Daniella Thompson

No appreciable change occurred in the neighborhood's character until the mid-20th century. From the 1950s until the early '70s, older houses on nearly every block were demolished, giving way to large, boxy apartment blocks. This trend was halted with the passage of the Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance in 1973.

During the 1960s, BART construction resulted in the loss of nearly all the houses along the north side of Hearst Avenue between Milvia and Sacramento streets. In response to citizen action, Ohlone Park was created instead of the apartments that BART had intended to construct on top of the train tube.

Today, the west side of M.L. King, Jr., Way between Berkeley Way and Hearst Avenue is entirely commercial, as is the east side of the street between Hearst Avenue and Delaware Street. All four corners on the intersection of M.L. King, Jr., Way and Hearst Avenue have changed dramatically since 1950.”¹

The previous Victorian style home of Samuel Heywood is the current site of KPFA Radio Building

SAMUEL HEYWOOD and family - occupants at 1929 Grove St 1897-

From Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association

https://berkeleyheritage.com/eastbay_then-now/heywood4.html

“Samuel Heywood (1833–1903) was Zimri Brewer Heywood’s fourth son, the first Heywood to have settled in Berkeley, and the one most closely associated with the family’s West Berkeley lumber yard.....

¹ Daniella Thompson Landmark application for the Charles H. Spear House, 1905 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way (2017).

....When Jacobs retired around 1876, Sam Heywood took over as sole manager.His 1874 marriage to Emma Frances Dingley would produce five children, and in 1880, the U.S. census recorded Emma's mother and two teenaged sisters in the household.It was time to provide ampler quarters for the growing family. Samuel responded by building a large, two-story house on a double lot at 812 Delaware Street. The Heywood lived here until 1897, when they moved to a turreted Queen Anne house at 1929 Grove Street (current location of KPFA)...

Property Sold

In 1967 property was listed for \$125,000 as 1921-1931 Grove and 1906-1908 Berkeley Way - "2 stores, 2 apartments...Adjacent old house on a 50 x 124 lot should be torn down..."²

It is likely that the house was torn down around that time, since the property was described as an empty lot when work began on the KPFA building in 1991.

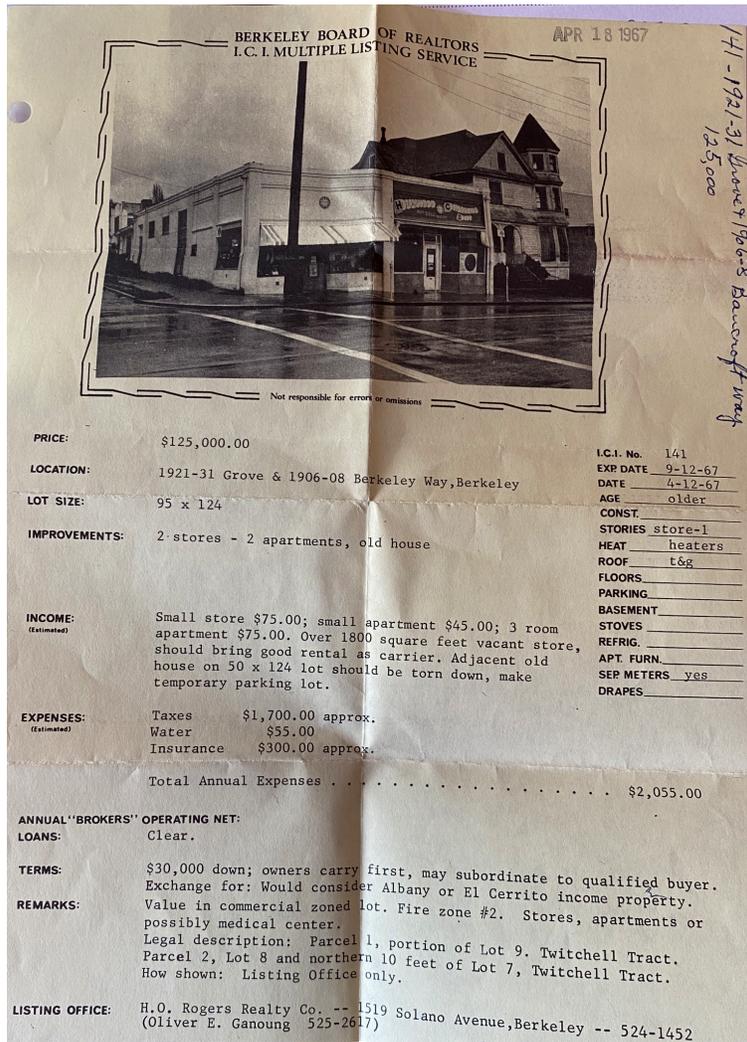


Figure 9. Berkeley Board of Realtors 4/18/1967 courtesy of BAHA

Alameda County Assessor's website:1991 and earlier, 1929 MLK Jr Way is listed as code 3000 (Vacant Commercial Land). Starting in 1992, it is listed with code 9400 (One to five story office building). The property was subsequently purchased by the Pacifica Foundation.

² Courtesy of Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association

KPFA's new headquarters

RICHARD WOLINSKY - from KPFA Program Guide Dec 1990

"First came the hole, then the slab. And now the framework. The new KPFA building is on the rise... Construction began in October 1990...After the empty lot was excavated...the move to the new building required applying to the FCC for a construction permit...COB permits were secured... We have line of site microwave access from the station to our transmitter atop Grizzly Peak. The new building requires a giant tower for the microwave as well as for the KPFB antenna and a satellite dish...KPFB antenna must be raised ten feet so it meets the stricter Russian standard (rather than the US standard to which the COB adheres to (no jokes please)...Designed for energy efficiency, with skylights, window-treatments and quiet air conditioning for the studios. Cool in summer and warm in winter...Long a haven in a heartless world for radicals, KPFA now has a haven of its own."³

KPFA's NEW BUILDING



⑨
2059





UPDATE

By Richard Wolinsky

FIRST CAME THE HOLE. THEN THE SLAB. And now the framework. The new KPFA building is on the rise. Some two and a half months after the groundbreaking ceremony, work is continuing on our new broadcast facility on Martin Luther King Jr. Way, one block north of University Avenue in Berkeley.

I spoke with Pat Scott, KPFA's General Manager, about the some of the work that's gone on, and what needs to be done. Pat has left many of her in-station duties to Assistant Manager Marci Lockwood in order to devote time to the construction. And the various tasks seem enormous.

As the superstructure for the building rises, the architects from Abrams & Millikan remain on-site, as does Maxine Schrogin, representing the contractor, Oliver & Company.

After the empty lot was excavated, cable troughs for electricity and plumbing were put in according to the instructions of David Carroll, well-known in the Bay Area for his technical expertise regarding radio stations. He worked with the architects and the electrician to make sure the building designs met KPFA's technical needs. We also hired a structural engineer to work with the architects to make the building both cost-efficient and technically sufficient. Acoustical consultant Red Wetherill from Wilson, Ehrig and Associates came on board to ensure that walls of the studios and the elevator are properly sound-insulated. Red has been great, Pat adds. "If there are any questions, I call him up and he comes out to the site or looks at the drawings."

Jim Bennett and the KPFA Operations Department have not been idle either. They've put out bids for equipment designed for KPFA's needs: flexibility for the wide range of radio possibilities, and durability for the large volume of people who use the studios and machines; we want people to be able to work without having to worry about things breaking down every two seconds.

Even though KPFA is only moving six-tenths of a kilometer, we still must apply to the FCC for a construction permit. We hired Dane Erickson from Hammond & Edison, a consulting engineer firm, to supply technical data to the Commission, and our attorneys in Washington, Haley, Bader & Potts are providing legal papers for the permit. All permits from the City of Berkeley, incidentally, have been secured.

Back to the building: after the troughs and pipes were put in, concrete for the slab was poured over them, and work on the frame began. That work should be completed some time in January. At that point, the roof will be attached, and construction will start inside: the walls, floors, telephone outlets, alarm configuration, case-work (window sills, floor boards, etc) and the broadcast tower.

At present, we have line-of-sight microwave access from the station to our transmitter atop Grizzly Peak. The new building requires a giant tower for the microwave, as well as for the KPFB antenna and a satellite dish. As I write this, we just found out the KPFB antenna must be raised ten feet so it meets the stricter Russian standard (rather than the U.S. standard) to which the City of Berkeley adheres (no jokes please).

Once the tower goes up, work can begin on the master control, with wiring distributed to all parts of the building. There will be a subfloor built underneath the main one in order that techies can get to electrical conduits. The studios are being designed for easy access to all equipment (for repairs and changes). We will also have documentation on everything — some of our equipment on Shattuck Avenue was built around the studios.

The building is being designed for energy-efficiency, with skylights, window-treatments, and quiet air-conditioning for the studios. The facility will be warm in winter and cool in summer. That's quite a change from our current residence.

Overall, the structure should be completed in May, 1991. The following four or five months will be spent finishing the studios, installing equipment, furnishing the offices. There will be a three-week period sometime next fall when things will be very tight as we orchestrate our move. The staff met on November 28th to start looking at the logistics.

How does all this affect our listeners? We will try to make the transition as easy as possible. But we will have to offer fewer community services. With the engineers intimately involved in the building project, we won't have the staff to make as many public service announcement cars as we do now — so community groups should be prepared for that eventuality. And with other staff members not only performing their regular duties but also working on the move, access to them may also be difficult. Again, we will try to accommodate. We have already begun curtailing our remote broadcasts until after the move.

And how is it all being paid for? Pat says that the folks from Wells Fargo have been great. They loaned us a cool million for construction and another \$450,000 for equipment. The Capital Campaign is still quite active, and we need to raise another \$250,000. If 250 subscribers buy a brick for \$1,000, we'll be covered. But remember: expenses will be up as well, so our regular operating costs will go up too. Our mortgage (rent) costs will rise 75% (the same amount, incidentally, as our rent next year if we remained where we are).

And where does it end? If all goes well, at this time next year, KPFA will be fully moved into the new building. In the meantime, keep your fingers crossed, contribute to the capital campaign if you can, and bear with us as we try to run a station and put up a new facility at the same time. Thanks (in advance) for your patience.

Richard Wolinsky is the Folio editor.

KPFA Program Guide, December 1990/FOLIO 5

Figure 10. KPFA Program Guide by Richard Wolinsky 1990

³ KPFA Program Guide by Richard Wolinsky 1990



Figure 11. San Francisco Chronicle February 17, 1992 Improved Headquarters by Allen Temko

16. Significance: Cultural Value consistent with Chapter 3.24.110 A.2

The KPFA building is a site of historic cultural significance, for its pioneering role as the first listener sponsored community radio station in the United States. KPFA is the crown jewel of the Pacifica Foundation Inc. which expanded from one Berkeley station to an interconnected network of 5 metropolitan area stations and 213 affiliate stations nationally. With the exception of the 500-watt UCB college radio station, KPFA's building houses the only broadcast studio in Berkeley and it reaches a wide audience across the Bay Area and Northern California with its powerful 59,000 watt transmitter. KPFA and the Pacifica Foundation Inc. are nationally recognized as symbols of the social and political movements that have shaped Berkeley and the wider world.

KPFA's Mission is to:

- To promote cultural diversity and pluralistic community expression.
- To contribute to a lasting understanding between individuals of all nations, races, creeds and colors.
- To promote freedom of the press and serve as a forum for various viewpoints.
- To maintain an independent funding base.

KPFA's building as a home site for independent listener sponsored media has made significant contributions to Berkeley's and California's historic culture of investigative inquiry, leadership in diversity, and informed social and political action.

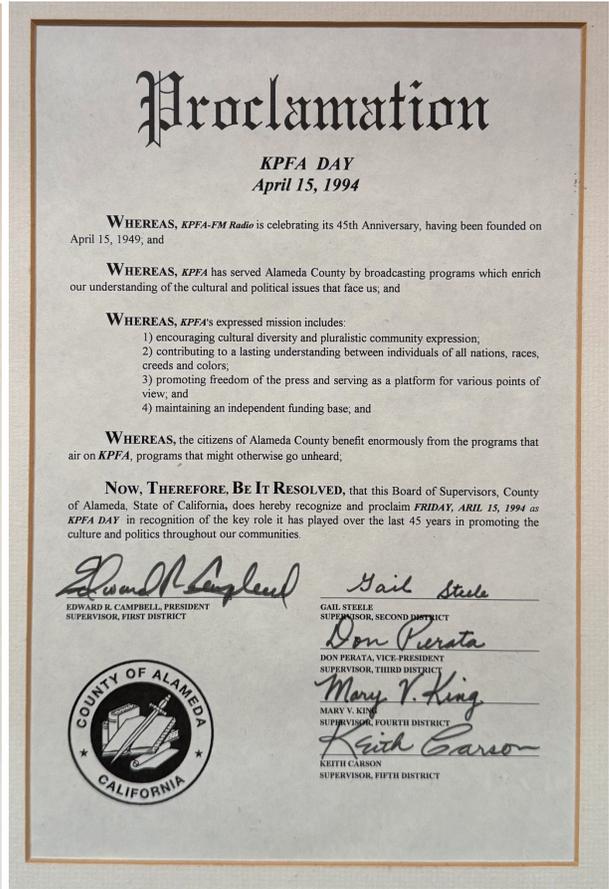


Figure 12 & 13. City of Berkeley Proclamation Recognizing KPFA's Contributions/Alameda County Proclamation of KPFA Day - photos by Lan Wolfley



Figure 14. Congressional Recognition from Representative Ron Dellums 8th Congressional District

The Pioneering Culture of Listener Sponsorship

KPFA, was the first Pacifica Foundation Inc. listener-supported, progressive media radio station and has been in existence for more than 75 years. Pacifica is the oldest independent community radio network in the US. KPFA was founded in 1949 by conscientious objector, Lewis Hill and a group of like-minded friends. His vision was to establish a medium that promoted pacifism and that was completely independent from advertisers. “He refined his idea to create a commercial-free radio station, one that would be an oasis for dialogue and a healthy exchange of ideas. He came to believe that pacifists, if they were going to have an influence in the world, needed to stand for specific ideas, not narrowly against the status quo, and that this public engagement might be an example of non-violent direct action.”⁴

In 1949, FM radio was in its infancy having been created in 1933 by American engineer Edwin Armstrong. FM radio offered a “higher fidelity-more accurate reproduction of the original program sound... less susceptible to common forms of interference, having less static and popping sounds than are often heard on AM.”⁵ KPFA was an early adopter of the FM band and because so few people had FM radios, KPFA offered FM radios as a premium to their listeners in their early fundraisers.

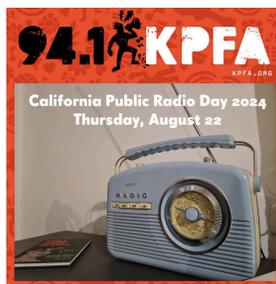


Figure 15. Early FM radio courtesy of KPFA

The station preserves its editorial integrity by protecting the journalistic freedom of its staff and diverse management team and KPFA operates as an independent listener supported organization with over 11,000 donating members.



Figure 16. Capital Campaign Builders in KPFA Lobby - photo courtesy of Lan Wolfley

⁴ From Pacifica Network [Pacifica Remembers Its Pacifist Roots](#)

⁵ Wikipedia on FM Broadcasting https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FM_broadcasting

Historic Cultural Value: consistent with Chapter 3.24.110 A.4

The building at 1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way has been witness to many historic events and recordings:

In 1999, over ten thousand community members mobilized and rallied in front of the station and around Berkeley for almost five months, to protect KPFA and support KPFA members' rights. The demonstrations made nation-wide news, garnered support from the City of Berkeley, Oakland and San Francisco, including a resolution passed by the Berkeley City Council calling on Pacifica to unlock the doors, rehire dismissed staff and institute local control of programming. These events garnered national attention in addition to local support from the Berkeley City Council, the City of Oakland, Alameda and Marin Counties, and the California State Legislature, highlighting the building's role as a historical community resource and its historical importance.



Figure 17 and 18. Daily Cal 8/3/1999 and Protesters at MLK, Jr Park at Berkeley Civic Center

Brian Edwards-Tiekert, Host of UpFront had this to say: “I had a strong first impression of the building: the evening I was scheduled to begin training in KPFA's News Department was the day the US started the invasion of Iraq. The station had played a crucial role in broadcasting the voices of dissidents and critics of the rush to war at a time where there were few other platforms available to them. KPFA had broadcast live from the historic anti-war demonstrations in the lead-up to the invasion. When I arrived at KPFA's front door on a cold, dark evening, there was an impromptu vigil of around a dozen people who collected around the speaker that overhangs KPFA's entrance, playing what's on air. In a time of great crisis, people were instinctively drawn to KPFA -- and the building itself was designed to accommodate that connection.”⁶

⁶ From a recent communication from Brian Edwards-Tiekert

The building is a living testimony to the evolution of non-commercial radio from its pioneering FM broadcasting to its multi-media platforms for investigative news, diverse music and discussions on social justice, environmental sustainability, economics, global peace and more.. In December of 2018, The Nation magazine's Progressive Honor Roll honored KPFA as the Most Valuable Radio Station and KPFA has been recognized by the City of Berkeley for its significant contributions.⁷

Historic Cultural Dates for the KPFA Building

- 1946 - Lewis Hill began creating the first listener-supported non-commercial radio station in the United States.
- 1949 - April 15, Pacifica first went on the air as KPFA 94.1 FM in Berkeley,
- In the 1950's, Elsa Knight Thompson helped build a news and public affairs department. Her many groundbreaking broadcasts included a 1958 program covering civil liberties for homosexuals, recognized as the first documentary regarding gay rights.
- The tradition of covering newsworthy issues continued into the 1960's covering the House on Un-American Activities Committee in San Francisco including the protests in what later would be turned into a documentary. In the 1970s KPFA coverage of the Vietnam War, conflicts in the Middle East, and reporting of the 1972 Democratic and Republican conventions provided independent perspectives of historic significance. Over the decades, KPFA's coverage of the Iran-Contra Hearings earned the station a George Polk award and further established KPFA's reputation for unbiased reporting.
- 1964 KPFA covered the UC Berkeley Free Speech Movement with live broadcasts from Sproul Plaza, rallies and sit-ins.
- In the seventies, KPFA played a key role in covering the kidnapping of Patty Hearst. "A group calling themselves the "Symbionese Liberation Army: Western Regional Unit" sent Berkeley radio station KPFA their first public communiqué... The SLA announced their involvement with an "arrest warrant" sent to Berkeley radio station KPFA and received by station manager Paul Fisher. The document announced that Hearst had been "arrested" as a result of a "warrant issued by: The Court of the People." It went on to state that Hearst had been "removed to a protective area of safety" and that any attempts to rescue her would lead to her execution...the SLA sent an audio taped communiqué on February 12, 1974, again via radio station KPFA. In this second message, both Cinque and Patricia spoke. Patricia's role was to reassure her family that she was still alive and in good condition...
- 1991 - September KPFA moved to its specially constructed ADA compliant multi-media center building at 1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way from its former upstairs space at 2201 Shattuck Ave.
- 1999 - Over the course of five months, up to an estimated 15,000 Bay Area concerned citizens demonstrated at the KPFA station building and throughout Berkeley in support of independent community media, demanding the reopening of KPFA after a conflicted and disputed shutdown. These events garnered national attention and support from local governments in Berkeley, Alameda County, and California and embodied the social, cultural, and political fabric of the region.

In describing KPFA's history for the 75th birthday KPFA Host/Producer Kris Welch talks about the events of 1999 and the powerful community response in defense of the station in a video posted on KPFA's YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcfWO5xTGd8>

- KPFA has been a longtime FCC emergency alert station and has served as a historic community resource during Berkeley and Northern California earthquakes, fires, floods and power outages mobilizing to broadcast and post information for evacuations, bulletins, and supplies. KPFA has provided programming and engineering support for Pacifica sister stations and helped during the recent

⁷ The Nation Magazine December 20, 2018: <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/2018-progressive-honor-roll/>

LA fires, immigration raids and No Kings Day. News producer Vanessa Tait reported: “KPFA’s transmitter was knocked off the air by the Oakland firestorm on October 20, 1991. But in the station’s recently opened studios, the newsroom was a hive of activity. The news team broadcast hourly updates and reports from KPFA journalists on the ground via local channel KPFB, which was still on the air.”

- KPFA’s upstairs news studio was the birthplace of Free Speech Radio News, an independent newscast created during the 2000 democracy fight at Pacifica Radio. The network’s striking freelance journalists founded FSRN as a worker-run collective, doing much of its production and distribution at KPFA in the early years.
- KPFB, a smaller KPFA associate station, also housed at 1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way has historically broadcast City of Berkeley City Council and School Board meetings where on many occasions, hundreds of residents overflowed onto the steps outside meetings when historic decisions were made.
- In 2013 a few blocks away from KPFA’s building, producers from the station covered community efforts to help protect the Berkeley Post Office from being sold and commercialized.
- In 2025 - KPFA celebrated its 76th birthday

For a more comprehensive history of KPFA and the Pacifica network: <https://kpfa.org/about/history/>



Figure 19. Larry Bensky and Daniel Ellsberg 1999

An Archive of Historic Cultural Treasures

The KPFA building is not only a home for production but also serves as an historical archive for a wide range of political, social, musical and cultural events captured over decades by KPFA producers, hosts and staff members from 1949 to the present. From its beginning with FM broadcasting to its multi-media platforms of today KPFA holds the history of the evolution of independent media.

Over its 76 year history, KPFA has drawn such luminaries as Daniel Ellsberg, Joan Baez, Dolores Huerta, Noam Chomski, May Angelou, Jane Fonda, Oliver Stone and many more in interviews and

recordings, Jerry Brown's, *We the People* was broadcast daily from the KPFA studios at 1929 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way from 1994 to 1997. In the 1990's *Democracy Now!*, a breaking news and public affairs program was created and continues to be broadcast on KPFA, and Pacifica stations today.. Some of KPFA's award winning programs include; Letters and Politics with Mitch Jeserich—spanning historical explorations from Ancient Greece, to the history of the United States and now, *Flashpoints* with Dennis Bernstein; *Democracy Now!*, with Amy Goodman; *A Rude Awakening* with Sabrina Jacobs; *This Way Out*, the only internationally distributed weekly LGBTQ radio program; and *Rising Up* with Sonali Kolhatkar.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, KPFA provided essential community support information while addressing the social and economic impacts of the crisis. KPFA covers national conventions and elections.

Short list of nationally and internationally recognized voices heard from KPFA's studios at 1929 MLK, Jr. Way:

Maya Anjelou, American memoirist, poet, and civil rights activist
Margaret Atwood, Canadian novelist, poet, literary critic and an inventor
Joan Baez, American singer, songwriter, musician, and activist
Phillis Bennis, American Jewish writer, activist, and political commentator
Larry Bensky, KPFA broadcaster, literary and political journalist
Jerry Brown, Former CA Governor *We the People* show from 1994 to 1997
Richard Chamberlain, American actor and singer
Noam Chomsky, American professor and public intellectual
Angela Davis, American Marxist and feminist political activist, philosopher, academic, and author
Joy DeGruy, American author, academic, and researcher
Donovan, Scottish musician, songwriter and record producer
Daniel Ellsberg, American activist, economist, & United States military analyst, the Pentagon Papers
Jane Fonda, American actress and activist
David Graeber, anthropologist, anarchist, and one of the initiators of Occupy Wall St
Chris Hedges, American journalist, author, commentator and Presbyterian minister
Seymour Hersh, American investigative journalist and political writer
bell hooks, American author
Dolores Huerta, American labor leader and feminist activist
Molly Ivans, American newspaper columnist, author, and political commentator
Erica Jong, American novelist, satirist, and poet
Ro Khanna, American politician and lawyer serving as the U.S. representative from CAs 17th congressional district since 2017
Barbara Lee, American politician who has served as the 52nd mayor of Oakland
Gabor Mate, Canadian physician who specializes in the study and treatment of addiction
Bill Means, American Indian Movement (AIM) activist and co-founder
Rashid Khalidi, Palestinian-American historian of the Middle East
Naomi Klein, Canadian author, social activist, and filmmaker
Tony Kushner, American author, playwright, and screenwriter
Peter Kuznik, professor of history and director of the award-winning Nuclear Studies Institute at American University, co-writer of *Oliver Stone's Untold History of the United State*
Alexander McCall Smith, Scottish legal scholar and author of fiction

Keith McHenry, American activist, best known as the co-founder of Food Not Bombs.
Bill McKibbin, author, educator, environmentalist, and Co-founder of 350.org
Ralph Nader, American lawyer and political activist involved in consumer protection, environmentalism, and government reform causes, *The Ralph Nader Radio Hour*
Thich Nhat Hanh, global spiritual leader, poet and peace activist
Johnnie Otis, Greek American singer, musician, composer, bandleader, record producer, talent scout, and preacher, host of the *Johnny Otis Show* on KPFA k2004-2007
Greg Palast, author and free lance journalist
Ilan Pappé, Israeli historian, political scientist, and former politician
Ari Shaw, Senior Fellow and the Director of International Programs at the Williams Institute, specializing in international human rights, LGBTQ+ law and policy
Norman Solomon, American journalist, media critic, activist, National Director of Roots Action
Oliver Stone, film director *Oliver Stone's Untold History of the United States*
Desmond Tutu, South African Anglican bishop and theologian
John Updike, American novelist, poet, short-story writer, art critic, and literary critic
Gore Vidal, American writer
Alice Waters, American chef, restaurateur, food writer, and author
Alice Walker, American novelist, short story writer, poet, and social activist
Richard D. Wolff, American Marxian economist, professor emeritus, weekly *Economic Update* show



Figure 20. Jane Fonda in conversation with Sasha Lilley of *Against the Grain* in 2005



Figure 21. Donovan with Dirk Richardson of *The Hear & Now* in 2004

News

At a time when independent news is under attack, KPFA's news department covers Berkeley, Bay Area, California national and international news with updates throughout the day on weekdays, and on weekend evenings. Over the years KPFA news has provided a voice for marginalized communities while covering breaking news, economic, health, environmental, and political events.

A Radio Media Champion for Berkeley's Cultural Diversity Movements

KPFA programming has honored and reflected the changing historical demographic and geographic cultural diversity of Berkeley, the Bay Area, California and the United States

During the Civil Rights Movement KPFA sent reporters to the South and If it were not for KPFA and other Pacifica stations the public would not have access to many **recordings of the speeches of Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks and Malcolm X.**

The station building has served as a media center for hosting historic interviews on **The Farmworkers Movement, Black Lives Matter, Me Too, Immigrant rights** issues and the many important movements of the times.

Diverse Programming Include

Africa Today is a weekly news program providing information and analysis about Africa and the African Diaspora, hosted by Walter Turner.

Apex Express is a collective member of AACRE, Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality. AACRE focuses on long-term movement building, capacity infrastructure, and leadership support for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders committed to social justice.

Bay Native Circle is a weekly program presenting special guests and explores today's Native issues, peoples, cultures, music & events with rotating hosts Morning Star Gali, Tony Gonzales, Eddie Madril and Janeen Antoine. The station covered Indigenous community events including the Occupation of Alcatraz, and protests at Standing Rock. The KPFA building supports the preparation for annual live broadcasts on Alcatraz for Indigenous People's Day and Thanksgiving sunrise ceremonies.

Hard Knock Radio went on the air in 2001. The show hosted by Davy D and Anita Johnson explores local hip hop culture and politics.

La Onda Bajita is a bilingual, Xicano/a/x Indigenous collective and radio program on KPFA 94.1 fm in the SF Bay Area. Since the late 1970s we have held a strong, steadfast commitment to give voice to Spanish-speaking & native communities. We use the power of words as a tool for change. We also continue to bring that Lowrider soul. This long running lowrider cruising show continues to creep along with a mix of barrio oldies and raza knowledge.

La Raza Chronicles is a weekly Latino affairs magazine program with a local and international focus, highlighting the social, political and cultural events affecting the Latino community.

Law & Disorder exposes the cracks in our system, agitates for resistance and collectively builds a new world where all of us thrive. Hosted by Cat Brooks. Produced by Jesse Strauss.

Making Contact is a radio program and podcast on KPFA Radio that focuses on social justice issues and the people involved in movements for change. The weekly show is hosted by Amy Gastelum, Salima Hamirani, Anita Johnson, and Lucy Kang

Pushing Limits provides critical coverage of disability issues and brings insight into the grassroots disability movement to the general public. Host-Producer of Pushing Limits, Adrienne Lauby had this to say “Pushing Limits could not have existed in the old building. We would have had to picket outside for access. LOL. Berkeley played an historic role in the Disability Rights Movement but one activist-producer* of KPFA’s “Disability Rap” had to be carried upstairs. 1929 MLK Dr. has an elevator and has aired Pushing Limits, a disability program, since 2003.” She also listed some luminaries in the disability movement associated with the program: Judy Heumann, Jana Overbo, Mary Lou Breslin and Pam Walker.

This Way Out is the only internationally distributed weekly LGBTQ radio program, currently airing on some 200 local community radio stations around the world. The award-winning half-hour magazine-style program features a summary of some of the major news events in or affecting the queer community (NewsWrap), in-depth coverage of major events, interviews with key queer figures, plus music, literature, entertainment — all the information and culture of a community on the move!

Women’s Magazine is an hour long radio program that presents and discusses women’s lives and issues globally and locally from a radical, multiracial, feminist, mujerist, womanist perspective.

Voices of the Middle East and North Africa airs once a week and is a richly diverse and fascinating world of culture and politics of the Middle East and North Africa, co-hosted by Khalil and Malihe.

Environmental Programming

Bioneers: Revolution from the Heart of Nature An award-winning series featuring social and scientific innovators with creative solutions to the most pressing challenges we face.

Terra Verde delivers news and views about the most critical environmental issues across California and globally.

A Rude Awakening is an award-winning climate crisis and environmental justice radio show with interviews and commentary – hosted and produced by Sabrina Jacobs

Education

Education Today is a radio show hosted by Kitty Kelly Epstein and Jaron Epstein that airs weekly

Choose to Be Curious is a show all about curiosity. We talk about research and theory, but mostly it’s conversations about how curiosity shows up in work and life. Hosted by Lynn Borton.

Music

The KPFA music studio has hosted local and nationally acclaimed musicians in live performances across a wide range of music genres including: jazz, Latin jazz and rhythms, blues, hip hop, classical, country, indigenous, bluegrass, world music, avant-garde compositions and more. KPFA’s extensive music library

offers diverse listening experiences and ensures that the musical traditions of our local communities and beyond are preserved and celebrated.



Figure 22. Historic Music Library - photo courtesy of Lan Wolfley

The station's cultural programming includes historic book reviews, poetry, and discussions on theater and film, making KPFA a significant cultural resource for the community.

KPFA's programming supports the Bay Area's caring culture by providing resources and information about community responses to urgent and life threatening challenges, affecting individuals and families.

Cultural Value as an Educational Institution

The KPFA building is a historic media training center that has offered decades of students and interns opportunities to acquire broadcasting and production skills through KPFA's News Department and other training and apprenticeship programs. The station has built strong relationships with local educational institutions including Berkeley Community College, UC Berkeley, Berkeley Media Center, and community organizations by providing collaborative hands-on learning in a real-world environment. KPFA as an educational resource helps to ensure that the knowledge and skills needed to understand, and participate in the production of independent media are passed onto future generations.

National YES State YES County YES City YES Neighborhood: YES.

KPFA 94.1 FM. has been a significant historical resource over a wide signal range across Northern California from well above Santa Rosa to as far south as the San Jose area. KPFA programming is also heard on KPFB 89.3 FM in Berkeley, KFCF 88.1 FM in Fresno, and KU Satellite intergalactically. KPFA content is shared with Pacifica's 200 affiliate stations across the United States and [KPFA.org](https://www.kpfa.org) listeners world-wide. KPFA also posts on KPFA Facebook @KPFA94.1 and Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Tik Tok @kpfaradio

Architectural Value: consistent with Chapter 3.24.110 A.1(c)

In 1991 when the building first opened, San Francisco Chronicle's architecture critic, Allan Temko remarked: "*So KPFA is a modest instant landmark, unprepossessing but with clear identity*" and "*Station KPFA's new building has a distinct Berkeley flavor*"

Award winning building:: The Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association's *1991 Honor Award*; and the Berkeley Design Advocates' *1993 Best Commercial Building*.

David Trachtenberg was the licensed Project Architect for this project while an associate at Abrams Millikan & Associates."

Denny Abrams had this to say recently: "The style is mainly expressed in the facade of the building. The remainder of the building gets its form from functions and need. The inspiration for the style of the facade is in part the legacy of John Hudson Thomas. His use of stucco on well-proportioned facades that rise above the roof line was always inspiring. Embossing the stucco with decorative elements are also part of his legacy. When David [Trachtenberg] and I were finalizing the details of the facade we realized that this was truly a very specialized historical work of architecture that deserved to be memorialized by embossing the facade."

Architect Denny Abrams added that "The KPFA building is an outstanding example of Post Modernism and Regional Modernism, a style that blends the functional demands of a radio station with the aesthetic considerations of its surrounding environment..... The building's design is not only architecturally significant but also serves as a prototype of how media-related architecture can be both functional and artistically expressive. The two-story structure houses essential broadcasting facilities, with production, administrative and communal spaces, interconnecting with interior windows which enhance communication and collaboration among staff. The design was shaped with the input of KPFA's stakeholders, ensuring that the building met the unique demands of community radio broadcasting." ⁸

Architect David Trachtenberg writes "The Pacifica Radio/ KPFA 94.1 FM building provides an efficient, economical, and memorable home for two venerated Berkeley institutions. As community-based and listener-supported radio producers, Pacifica and KPFA depend on professional staff, as well as a diverse group of volunteers and contributors, to facilitate their day-to-day operations. Accordingly, the design process engaged all the stakeholders by way of consensus-building meetings and extensive personal interviews. The resulting schematic renderings were used to galvanize a significant capital campaign and give new focus, energy and identity to both organizations.

The facade evokes a temple in its simple three-part, symmetrical composition. We recall that during the design process, some voices criticized the design of the facade for being too "historicist" and not being enough "of our own time," ie a design that would evoke the chaotic, asymmetrical, modern, challenging, or uncomfortable condition of our own moment in history. However, such an approach was not of interest to us. We[In] hindsight, we believe we made the right call. The iconography of KPFA as a

⁸ Denny Abrams- email correspondence July 23, 2024

temple has a certain logic for KPFA embodies a set of values and beliefs as deeply held by its adherents as any religious order.

KPFA's previous digs, a ramshackle warren of rooms above Eddie's [Edy's] Soda Fountain on Shattuck Avenue, had terrible acoustics— and worse equipment. The new building would be a state-of-the-art facility with a fairly complex mix of sound studios, mixing rooms, conference spaces, and offices. Through [Though] counter-intuitive, Pat Scott, General Manager during the period when we were designing the building, directed us to place the most sound-sensitive rooms adjacent to and visible to the large central atrium and stairway. She wanted her staff to see the guts of the operation as they moved about the building and never to forget that they were in the building to create great radio content. We also recall, with delight, that the building, at its inauguration, was dubbed “The People’s Cadillac”.



Figure 23. Conference Room - photo courtesy of Lan Wolfley

Architect S. Ross Bogen further describes the building style with “The architecture of the building is emblematic of its time: while not necessarily intended as such by its designers, it is part of the New Urbanism of the late 20th century, fitting into its surroundings and respecting the historical context of its neighbors. It does this by “holding the street”, building up to the sidewalk to maintain the unity of the street wall of commercial storefronts that about it, and abiding by the conventions that govern their early-20th century design: overall form reflecting traditional human-scaled elements, use of craft-based ornament, and limited (abstracted in KPFA’s case) references to historical architecture. In this respect it is also related to the Postmodernism of the previous decade and the broader Regional Modernism of the latter half of the 20th century.

The basic organization of the facade - described by its designer, architect David Trachtenberg - as “evoking a temple” via a simplified, symmetrical three-bay form, could be described as following a Roman “basilica” form, with a raised and arched central bay bordered by narrower ones, divided

horizontally to reflect the two internal stories behind them. This is the convention adopted throughout the post-Roman west for church architecture, so familiar in Romanesque churches (often referred to as “basilicas”) and reaching their peak in the Gothic cathedrals of the late middle ages. There is no more fundamental historical precedent in Western architecture, other than the actual greco-roman temple front, and this building does its modest part, in a reformation of sorts contrary to earlier 20th century modernist dogma, to reinstate it for an important public institution.

In addition, the arched central bay-plus-side-windows also references a late Renaissance figure, the *serliana*, named for 16th C. Venetian architect Sebastiano Serlio. It is more popularly known as the “palladian window”, for Andrea Palladio, Serlio’s much better known Venetian contemporary, who employed it to much broader and visible effect in northern Italy, and whose published design work was taken up by 18th century English and then American architects. So ubiquitous as to be almost a cliché in residential architecture of the late 19th-early 20th century (not to mention late 20th C. post-Modern and current day historicist pastiche rampant in suburban commodity housing), here it is employed at what is termed “giant scale” in classical architecture to emphasize the basilica form that organizes the interior, as it should in any proper work of public architecture. It is set within a gabled parapet that forms a counterpoint to the arched opening, reflects the roof beyond and evokes historical conventions employed by early-20th C. Bay Area architects such as John Hudson⁹ Thomas.

The facade performs the essential function of expressing the overall concept of the building, which reflects the basilica form in its interior organization, with a high central space bordered by two-story aisles. Where the building departs from classical precedent is in the space above the aisles, which classically (or gothically) would have high clerestory windows. Here there is a marvelous gabled skylight, retractable ala the more dramatic applications in new athletic stadiums, that is visible through the facade’s arched central window, and is as much a part of the design as anything else on the outside of the building.

The *serliana* is minimally detailed, almost to the point of abstraction, but the facade employs text in a decorative way to evoke ornament and communicate the building’s purpose, and add fine-grained detail to relate it to its older neighbors. Over the central arch, letters in a classical serif font spelling out “Pacifica” are incised in the plaster surface, a device cited by the architects as inspired by the work of John Hudson Thomas. Over the entry, a balcony forms a canopy, and a recessed band at the lower edge forms a marquee of sorts, with applied metal letters - in an almost Art Deco sans-serif font - spelling out the radio station’s call sign and frequency. It’s a subtle nesting of historical allusions to the different eras combined in the building: its philosophical foundations in the early-20th C. Progressive Movement and the technological promise of the Radio Age.

The entry itself is the more highly detailed and ornamented section of the facade, as appropriate to the part most closely encountered by anyone visiting the building. Teal craft tiles with gold accents form a wainscot and surround for the glazed bronze doors, which are topped by a transom light. A decorative flourish from the classicized language of the Progressive Era are romanized bronze grilles applied to the transom and doors that, unfortunately, have had to be removed from the doors due to unaccounted-for structural stress on the frames, but may be reinstalled after the frames have been reengineered and reinforced. Enlivening the wall space on either side of the doors are display cases designed for announcements.

The other exposed elevation of the building is on the north, overlooking a parking lot but visible from Berkeley Way. This wall is restrained and even plain, as expected for a minor side, but it has a careful composition of evenly spaced second story windows, with a notched parapet - alternate notches holding roof overflow scuppers - reinforcing the rhythm of the windows below.”¹⁰

Architect: David Trachtenberg

⁹ Denny Abrams- email correspondence July 23, 2024

¹⁰ S. Ross Bogen, AIA, Landmarks committee chair, Tracy Historical Museum

Stackhouse De La Pena Trachtenberg Architects - Founding Principal

“His Harvard design thesis was the design of a Jewish Community Center in Berkeley, California. Thesis Advisor: Moshe Safdie. He returned to the Bay Area and worked for various architects, builders, and developers for a couple of years. David started Trachtenberg Architects in 1991 and has been running his own firm for 28 years. The office has designed over two hundred buildings, the majority of which are in or around Berkeley.

Local projects include buildings for KPFA Radio, The Trust for Public Land, ACLU Headquarters, The Berkeley Bowl Marketplace, Saul’s Deli, Comal Restaurant, Backroads, MIG Headquarters, Jung Institute, Pathways Homeless Shelter, SYDA Meditation Temple, Acme Bread Company, Cody’s Books, Kermit Lynch offices, Peet’s Coffee Headquarters, and about fifty private residences. Most of the projects these days are large multi-family projects. They have built 300 units so far in Berkeley and have another 1,500 in the pipeline.”

He continues to influence the face of Berkeley with his many works throughout the city - from single-family homes, to multi-family structures, many Berkeley businesses and well-loved Berkeley institutions.”¹¹

“What do Berkeley Bowl, the Rose Grocery project and the new Read Building on Fourth Street have in common? Their architect is David Trachtenberg, known for responding to the historical feel of Berkeley architecture while creating structures with a distinctive look.

His architectural forebears include Bernard Maybeck and Julia Morgan, founders of the Bay Region style of architecture, which emphasized building with natural materials and featured rooms that interacted with the outdoors. But he also brings a contemporary sensibility to his work and bridges the gap between past and present - sometimes in a single building...

Trachtenberg, 50, grew up in Pittsburgh as a triplet in a family with five children. He received a bachelor's degree in architecture from UC Berkeley before earning a master's degree in architecture from the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

He lives in a century-old Berkeley brown shingle house and has run Trachtenberg Architects in the same city since 1991. Robert Nishimori, the other principal, and project architects Isaiah Stackhouse and Neven Krickovich work there with him. Examples of the firm's residential and commercial work can be found from Petaluma to San Jose, including several San Francisco projects. But Trachtenberg's primary accomplishment is helping to shape the look of Berkeley with commercial buildings such as Saul's Restaurant & Delicatessen, the former Cody's Books on Fourth Street, and the mixed-use building that houses La Farine bakery on Solano Avenue.

Berkeley architect David Snippen said, "What Trachtenberg has contributed to Berkeley is a legacy of very fine architecture that hopefully will be understood and admired for a long time. It's added a lot to the cultural inventory." A member of the city's Design Review Committee, Snippen adds, "When we see him come in with a project, we take a breath and relax."...

He's known for creating spaces with a terrific sense of flow and pleasing proportions. His buildings feel inviting, and although that partly derives from his Bay Region predecessors, another key influence is Christopher Alexander (formerly of Berkeley and now in England), who wrote prolifically about the design process and produced many insights about why certain spaces feel right and even timeless.”¹²

¹¹ From Urban Adamah “David Trachtenberg - Urban Adamah” <https://urbanadamah.org/team/david-trachtenberg/>

¹² **David Trachtenberg: Refining that Berkeley look**
<https://www.sfgate.com/homeandgarden/article/David-Trachtenberg-Refining-that-Berkeley-look-3186496.php>
Architect David Trachtenberg's projects adapt to the times but are inspired by the Bay Region style
By Eve Kushner, Special to The Chronicle Nov 5, 2008

Architect: Denny Abrams
Abrams/Millikan & Associates
Urban Ecology

“Graduate UC Berkeley joint program City and Regional Planning & Urban Economics. Worked as City Planner for Hud 1968, Planner at Sasaki Walker 1969, Research in Architecture and Urban Design with Christopher Alexander at Center for Environmental Structure. 1968 - 1974. Started Abrams Millikan & Kent design build firm 1974 to present. Designed & built many residential projects. Notable projects are Fourth Street, Berkeley 1978 to present and Bancroft Center 1989 to present, Northface Headquarters 1983, KPFA & WBAI production studios. Lectures ULI, UC Berkeley Haass, UC Berkeley Architecture, NYU City planning, Princeton University City Planning”¹³

“Denny Abrams made his mark on Berkeley by transforming Fourth Street from a rundown strip of warehouses into a walkable urban idyll that remains one of the region’s most inviting commercial districts. He’s still pursuing projects with Abrams/Millikan & Associates, his Fourth Street-based design/build development firm, but he’s also found a very different field to play in, backing some of the most creative artists in jazz.”¹⁴



Figure 24. Skylight courtesy of David Trachtenberg

Builder

“Lloyd H. Oliver and Charles E. Coburn founded Oliver & Coburn in 1946—just 9 years after Lloyd Oliver helped complete the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge.

Today we are Oliver & Company: a hands-on, full-service construction company. We have completed over 2,000 buildings across Northern California; all have been completed to the full satisfaction of our clients.

We handle the work ourselves—we are not a construction broker. Our crew includes over seventy-five carpenters and experienced field staff supported by a twenty-five person in-house project management team. We all work together, solving problems daily to keep each project moving forward.

Our ability to execute stems from the long-term relationships we have with our employees; the average tenure for an employee of Oliver & Company is over seventeen years, with some employees staying with us their entire careers. Simply put, we believe we have the best team in the industry.

We are highly selective about our projects and clients. A founding member of the Construction Employers Association, we are known for our integrity and commitment to working closely with our clients and successfully bringing their projects to completion.”¹⁵

¹³ Denny Abrams LinkedIn page <https://www.linkedin.com/in/denny-abrams-a94a518>

¹⁴ **Berkeleyside - Denny Abrams, creator of Fourth Street, has a jazzy second life** By Andrew Gilbert May 26, 2021 <https://www.berkeleyside.org/2021/05/26/fourth-street-denny-abrams-jazz-music>

¹⁵ Oliver and Company - About <https://oliverandco.net/company/about-us/>

17. Is the property endangered? YES.

The KPFA Radio Building is being used as collateral on a loan made to the Pacifica Foundation Inc. Pacifica owns KPFA and 4 other stations. KPFA may be at risk of being sold and converted for a different use. Other Pacifica buildings have been sold to pay off debt. The original purchase of the KPFA site included the buildings at 1921-1925 MKJ Jr Way, adjacent to the KPFA building on the north side. See *Figure 16*. In 2019, Pacifica was forced to sell those properties to reduce loan balances. In 2024, the Los Angeles KPFA station building was also sold.

Today, the importance of KPFA and Pacifica is not missed by the authors of Project 2025. On pages 245-247 of Project 2025, not only are they going after NPR and PBS but Pacifica Radio as well. Over the last few decades news media has been reduced to a few large conglomerates who control what we hear and read. Their primary motive is profit. Information is reduced to sound bites by highly-paid pundits with repetitious stories omitting details that might shed light on corruption, civil rights abuses and threats to our democracy. KPFA, listener-supported since 1949, is beholden to no one but the listeners and is committed to providing thorough coverage of local, national and world events.

KPFA is the flagship station of the Pacifica network. It is the most financially sustainable station with a valuable and historic mission worthy of support. Once lost, it could not be reconstructed. Because of the KPFA building's unique value as a treasured community resource we strongly urge that the KPFA building at 1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way be designated as an historic landmark to protect it now and for future generations and to celebrate its many and major contributions to the City of Berkeley and beyond.

18. Photographs: from the KPFA photo archives and staff members **Date:** see photos

Repository: KPFA photo archives, Attn. Peter Stickney

Photographer: see photos

19. Bibliography:

Architects: <https://trachtenbergarch.com/project/pacifica-radio-kpfa-94-1-fm/> and <http://www.urbanecology.org/portfolio/abrams.html>

Descriptions of building: S. Ross Bogen, AIA, Landmarks committee chair, Tracy Historical Museum

Neighborhood Historic Information: Daniella Thompson, Architectural Historian

KPFA: <https://kpfa.org/>

KPFA Facilities: <https://kpfa.org/facilities/>

KPFA Programs: https://kpfa.org/programs/_s_of_radio_production_broadcasting

The History of KPFA: <https://kpfa.org/about/history/>

Kris Welch - 50 Years at KPFA - Interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLTDekq6qR8>

KPFA Presents the 75th Birthday Special - Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcfWO5xTGd8>

Paul Robeson - KPFA Interview, February 8 1958: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDb9nM_iiXw

Wikipedia, KPFA: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KPFA>

20. Recorder:

Date:

Organization:

References

1. Charles Burress (July 15, 1999). "[Battleground at KPFA -- Employees Locked Out: Hundreds of fans protest changes at Berkeley radio station](#)". *San Francisco Chronicle*. Retrieved 2012-02-22.
2. Charles Burress, Janine DeFao (July 16, 1999). "[Legislators Step Into KPFA Clamor: Hearing demanded as protesters besiege Berkeley station a third night](#)". *San Francisco Chronicle*. Retrieved 2012-02-22.
3. Michael Taylor (July 17, 1999). "[Berkeley Gets Radical Over KPFA Lockout: Anyone with a cause welcome to protest](#)". *San Francisco Chronicle*. Retrieved 2012-02-22.