

From: [Carla Woodworth](#)
To: [Crane, Fatema](#)
Cc: [Landmarks Preservation Commission](#)
Subject: Ms. Crane...please distribute to the Landmarks Preservation Commission before their Thursday, November 3, 2022 meeting
Date: Wednesday, November 02, 2022 9:06:08 PM

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BY Email: LPC@CityofBerkeley.info, fcrane@cityofberkeley.info

November 2, 2022

Berkeley Landmarks Preservation Commission
Fatema Crane, Landmarks Preservation Commission Secretary
City of Berkeley
1947 Center Street
Berkeley, CA 94704

Subject: Plans to demolish clubhouse at 2720 Hillegass Avenue

Dear Ms. Crane,

I am writing to the Landmarks Preservation Commission concerning the City's proposal to demolish the Willard Park clubhouse at 2720 Hillegass Avenue.

I represented District 7 as a Berkeley City Councilmember from 1990-1996. I was very involved with Willard Park throughout my time on the council, especially since it fell within my District.

I request that the Landmarks Preservation Commission not act on the demolition proposal at this time. The history of Willard Park contained in your packet is inadequate.

It doesn't consider Willard Park as a whole.

Frederick Law Olmsted, the great American designer of parks, said "The park should, as far as possible, complement the town. Openness is the one thing you cannot get in buildings."

The application looks at the clubhouse without taking into account the park in its entirety. The park is not a set of buildings. Its major value consists of the green open space it provides for our community.

It leaves out the planning and development of the park.

The City's application does not discuss the planning and development of Willard Park. Fred Harvey, a Benvenue neighbor and attorney (1928-2021), and a Berkeley Parks Commissioner participated in the design of the park along with dozens of other residents who rejected the first design for a large structure in the middle of the new park. The application fails to mention Mr. Harvey and others involved the neighborhood participation in the design process of the original park.

The original architect for the park, Mr. Zach Stewart of San Francisco was not contacted by Rincon Consultants until Wednesday, November 2 when he received a phone call from Rincon staff in Seattle.

It ignores the tot-lot.

There is no mention of the 1990's tot-lot addition to Willard Park or Michael O'Leary, a Berkeley landscape architect who worked with the Berkeley community in siting a new tot-lot area through a long planning process in the early 1990's. There is just a very limited mention of the group Friends of Willard Park. Friends of Willard Park, headed by Bill Lipsky and others championed the hiring of Mr. O'Leary. These community members mobilized participation in the planning for the tot-lot area,

and devoted hours of painstaking work to make sure the project was properly implemented by the City.

It fails to provide a cost estimate or safety review of the proposed new restroom site.

Part of this application calls for demolishing the existing outside restroom as well as the restrooms within the clubhouse. The replacement park user restroom is planned for an area just east of the tennis courts. The neighbors oppose this location as Willard is an urban park and people are concerned about park users' safety in a building so removed from the eyes and ears of neighbors. There has not been a review by the Berkeley Police Department about possible problems with safety. The neighbors are also concerned that the cost of such a restroom may top the \$1.7 million that was going to be spent on a new restroom in a pocket park in San Francisco until Governor Newsom commented that such an expense exceeded the cost of a median house in San Francisco. When I asked in October about the estimate cost of the new restroom in Willard Park, I was told that this estimate was not available.

Going back to Frederik Law Olmsted, he reminds us what parks are for: "The most essential element of park scenery is turf in broad unbroken fields, because in this the antithesis of the confined spaces of the town is most marked." And he notes: "Free admission to the best scenery of their neighborhood is desirable. It is, indeed, necessary, if life is to be more than the meat."

Sincerely,

Carla Woodworth
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