



Disaster and Fire Safety Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR  
September 10, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Disaster and Fire Safety Commission  
Submitted by: Weldon Bradstreet, Chairperson, Disaster and Fire Safety Commission  
Subject: Recommendation Regarding Panoramic Hill Secondary Evacuation

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution approving the development of a plan that includes a feasibility study and identification of funding sources for the construction of an emergency secondary egress road on Panoramic Hill. Such a plan could include discussions between the City of Berkeley, the City of Oakland, UC Berkeley, East Bay Regional Parks District and Alameda County and should also provide for continued contact with the Disaster and Fire Safety Commission (DFSC) as well as other related Berkeley Commissions as the Council determines.

POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

On July 15, 2024, the Public Safety Committee adopted the following action: M/S/C (Taplin/Bartlett) to send the Commission item and the City Manager Companion Report to Council, and giving a positive recommendation to the City Manager Companion Report for City Council to adopt a Resolution directing the Fire Department to reach out to other impacted landowners to determine interest in pursuing, and coordinate costs sharing to conduct a feasibility study to identify a safe secondary evacuation and access route for the access impaired Panoramic neighborhood. Vote: All Ayes.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

The full fiscal impacts of constructing a secondary access/egress route are yet unknown and will need to be researched following the completion of a feasibility study. The Fire Chief has indicated that Berkeley’s portion of a feasibility study should be able to be funded through existing Department funds.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The difficulty of providing both fire/emergency services to Panoramic Hill and evacuation of residents has been well known for more than 70 years. In 1959, an emergency secondary access road was constructed which allowed only emergency vehicle access into the area, but not emergency secondary egress for residents to evacuate. In the meantime, development in Berkeley and Oakland has continued and

the situation for residents has become increasingly serious. The neighborhood is surrounded by wildlands on three sites and by recent Southside upzoning and Memorial Stadium (capacity 63,000) and the Hayward Earthquake Fault at its base. The Panoramic Hill neighborhood is zoned ES – R (Environmental Safety – Residential) the only area in Berkeley so designated. Information regarding the ES – R zone can be found in the Berkeley Municipal Code, Title 23, section 23.202.070. The stated General Purpose of the ES-R District is as follows:

Because of its substandard vehicular access, steep slopes, inadequate water pressure and proximity to the Hayward Fault and vegetated wildlands, the Panoramic Hill area is exceptionally vulnerable to severe damage or destruction from fire and earthquake hazards. Panoramic Hill also includes one of Berkeley's most architecturally significant residential districts, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places because of its association with the Arts and Crafts movement of the Bay Area Tradition

#### BACKGROUND

This is an urgent matter as all current information indicates that wildfires have become more frequent and intense than in previous years. Additionally, we also are hearing that the likelihood of a major earthquake along the Hayward Fault is long overdue. The ES-R zoning of Panoramic Hill officially recognizes the area as having residential development with only one way in and one way out. While the city has recognized this for years, the area's evacuation problems have not been addressed. Today, Berkeley is the second most dense city on a list of 51 largest cities in the State of California. Berkeley is exceeded only by San Francisco. We are denser than Los Angeles and San Diego, and further we are uniquely bisected by a major earthquake fault, and have numerous officially designated landside areas and liquefaction zones within a tiny 10 square mile area.

**Commission Vote:** Vote: Ayes – Katz, Wilson, Kinoshian, Dean, Murphy, Bradstreet; Noes – None; Abstain – None

#### RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

There is no public transportation, nor is there likely to be any in the future of Panoramic Hill. The problem of evacuation has been recognized in part by enacting street parking restrictions in the area. However, street parking enforcement has always been a problem and enacting further restrictions is not the answer as buildings have been constructed over the years without on-site parking and street parking restrictions have already been enacted. Recently, in response to comments from the State Department of Community Development, new regulations have been approved which allow construction of both an ADU and JADU on each parcel in all High Severity Fire Areas which includes Panoramic Hill. This may change when an evacuation study is completed sometime next year, but if it does, it cannot be undone by retroactively requiring that existing buildings install on-site parking. Consideration of adding more

street parking restrictions currently simply ignores the serious problems that already exist.

While an emergency apparatus *only* access road (the Jordon Trail) was constructed many years ago, it is past time to also recognize that no secondary emergency egress road for residents to evacuate the area when needed is a matter of basic public safety. Such an escape road does not need to be paved with asphalt and have sidewalks and curbs like a city street, Construction of a secondary emergency egress road that saves lives by providing an escape route combined with the existing secondary access road for emergency vehicles benefits not only residents of Panoramic Way, but also all residents of the city by slowing the expansion of potentially catastrophic events and saving lives. For the sake of public safety, we must take action now.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

No alternative actions were considered.

CITY MANAGER

See Companion Report

CONTACT PERSON

Weldon Bradstreet, Chairperson, Disaster and Fire Safety Commission

Attachments:

1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

RECOMMENDATION REGARDING PANAROMIC HILL SECONDARY EVACUATION

WHEREAS, because of its substandard vehicular access, steep slopes, inadequate water pressure and proximity to the Hayward Fault and vegetated wildlands, the Panoramic Hill area is exceptionally vulnerable to severe damage or destruction from fire and earthquake, and

WHEREAS, Panoramic Hill also includes one of Berkeley's most architecturally significant residential districts, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places because of its association with the Arts and Crafts movement of the Bay Area Tradition, and

WHEREAS, the difficulty of providing both fire/emergency services to Panoramic Hill and evacuation of residents has been well known for more than 70 years. In 1959, an emergency secondary access road was constructed which allowed only emergency vehicle access into the area, but not emergency secondary egress for residents to evacuate.

WHEREAS, the ES-R zoning of Panoramic Hill officially recognizes the area as having residential development with only one way in and one way out. While the city has recognized this for years, the area's evacuation problems have not been addressed. Today, Berkeley is the second most dense city on a list of 51 largest cities in the State of California. Berkeley is exceeded only by San Francisco. We are denser than Los Angeles and San Diego, and further we are uniquely bisected by a major earthquake fault, and have numerous officially designated landside areas and liquefaction zones within a tiny 10 square mile area.; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that approves the development of a plan that includes a feasibility study and identification of funding sources for the construction of an emergency secondary egress road on Panoramic Hill. Such a plan could include discussions between the City of Berkeley, the City of Oakland, UC Berkeley, East Bay Regional Parks District and Alameda County and should also provide for continued contact with the Disaster and Fire Safety Commission (DFSC) as well as other related Berkeley Commissions as the Council determines.