



April 18, 2023

Design Review Committee
1947 Center Street, 2nd Floor
Berkeley, CA 94704
ATTN: Anne Burns

Dear Committee Members:

On the evening of Wednesday March 1, after nearly three hours of testimony and lively discussion, the City of Berkeley's Planning Commission unanimously referred the Bird Safe Berkeley Requirements ordinance to the City Council for their approval. The final ordinance, substantially based on a version provided by Golden Gate Audubon, will be among the most effective bird-safe building ordinances in the country if approved in its current form by the City Council.

In Berkeley, research suggests that between 100,000 and 600,000 birds die at windows every year, just from the currently existing buildings. With the current increase in construction, that number will continue to grow unless action is taken, and it will take decades to begin to lower the current unsustainable toll, even with the most effective new ordinances.

A recent study from the Acopian Center for Ornithology at Muhlenberg College found that bird-safe glass adds insignificantly to the total cost of construction. "The monthly debt service on a medium-sized office building (\$32,900) will only increase by about \$125 due to the cost of bird-safe glass." Estimates range from increased total costs of 0.17% to 0.38%, depending on the size of the project, assuming that bird-safe glass is 25% more expensive than the lowest-cost glass. Typically the glass itself represents less than 30% of the cost of a window. The reality is that developers very rarely use the lowest-cost glass in any case. In addition, simply by reducing the total amount of glass, developers can achieve both material cost-savings and long-term energy savings. Bird-safe glass will help align incentives for addressing climate change even as it directly addresses the biodiversity crisis.

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For residential buildings the story is similar. Most standard single and double hung window include full external screens, adding no additional cost to remodeling or new construction. For those buildings with more expansive picture windows, bird-safe glass adds about 8% to the total cost of the window. While the glass itself may be up to 20% more expensive compared to the cheapest available glass, the cost of the glass only represents about 25% of the cost of the window. These costs will only continue to decline as the market demand grows.

Of course, many suppliers in the area are still unaware of the issue and the potential solutions. Golden Gate Audubon is in the process of compiling a resource list of solutions and suppliers, and is reaching out to educate area window installers. We will share the first edition of our resource guide in early May and anticipate revising it regularly in the coming months as we educate more suppliers.

Thank you so much for your attention to this critical issue. The Design Review Committee's dedication to bringing Berkeley into alignment with the best science and best practices shows Berkeley's commitment to protecting our community and our environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Glenn Phillips".

Glenn Phillips

Executive Director