

**Jacob, Melinda**

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**Subject:** FW: Re: Sept 11 agenda item 2105 Los Angeles Ave, Berkeley

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**From:** Stover, Samella <[SStover@berkeleyca.gov](mailto:SStover@berkeleyca.gov)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 10, 2025 12:13 PM  
**To:** [kellyhammargren@gmail.com](mailto:kellyhammargren@gmail.com)  
**Cc:** Klein, Jordan <[JKlein@berkeleyca.gov](mailto:JKlein@berkeleyca.gov)>; Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB) <[Planningzab@berkeleyca.gov](mailto:Planningzab@berkeleyca.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: Sept 11 agenda item 2105 Los Angeles Ave, Berkeley

Good Afternoon, Ms. Hammargren,

I received your email and hope the following information alleviates your concerns.

The existing nonconforming setback and associated door are pre-existing conditions on the property and are not exacerbated by the current proposal. The scope of work—conversion of basement space into a recreation room, entry hall, and bathroom—is located entirely within the existing building envelope and outside all required setbacks. As such, the project does not create any new encroachment into required setbacks. The proposed construction is within the existing building, which will remain the same size. This project has been reviewed by both the Building & Safety division and the Fire Department and deemed the proposed changes safe and compliant with code.

In addition to adding habitable space, the project introduces several structural improvements designed to increase the overall safety and resilience of the dwelling. These include the installation of new concrete slabs, retrofitting of shear walls, and the addition of new structural support beams. Collectively, these upgrades will bring the structure closer to current seismic safety standards, which is particularly important given the property’s location within a mapped earthquake and landslide zone. The Building Code will regulate these changes.

Rather than exacerbating hazards, the proposed work strengthens the building, reduces seismic vulnerabilities, and enhances life-safety protections for the occupants. The project does not involve discretionary reductions in setbacks or waivers of fire safety standards. Accordingly, staff’s determination is that the project complies with applicable zoning requirements and improves the structural safety of the property without increasing risks to surrounding properties or the neighborhood.

Respectfully,



Samella Stover  
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***NEW HOURS: The Permit Service Center (PSC), including the zoning counter, is open between 8:30 am – 2:30 pm (final check in at 2:00 pm) Monday through Thursday.***

*To limit the spread of COVID-19, face masks and social distancing are required when visiting our offices, and some Planning staff continue to work remotely.*

***All permit-related and Zoning services are available online. Please visit us [online](#) for more information.***

**Jacob, Melinda**

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**From:** Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB)  
**Subject:** FW: Sept 11 agenda item 2105 Los Angeles Ave, Berkeley

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**From:** kelly hammargren <kellyhammargren@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 5, 2025 10:19 PM  
**To:** Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB) <Planningzab@berkeleyca.gov>  
**Cc:** Klein, Jordan <JKlein@berkeleyca.gov>  
**Subject:** Sept 11 agenda item 2105 Los Angeles Ave, Berkeley

**WARNING:** This is not a City of Berkeley email. Do not click links or attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Zoning Adjustment Board Members and Planning Department Staff,

Using the Earthquake Zones Required Investigation map <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/informationwarehouse/eqzapp/> and the City of Berkeley Community GIS Portal map with the new designated fire zone areas <https://berkeley.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2c7dfafbb1f64e159f4fdf28a52f51c6&showLayers=Berkeley%20Parcels;Base%20Data;Fire%20and%20Emergency%20Service&level=15>, there is no way this project at 2105 Los Angeles Ave. should be sitting in the consent calendar.

The proposed project at 2105 Los Angeles which according to staff write up is accessed through the west interior setback measured 2 ft 5 in while the required setback is 4 feet.

Under no circumstances should any project in the high fire and very high fire hazard severity zones be designed or constructed intruding into the required minimum setback.

Additionally, besides this project being in the designated high fire zone it is also in the designated landslide zone.

It seems that the fire zone hillside overlay is just something to mention in the staff writeup and then dismiss.

It might be good for everyone to start thinking about what another fire in Berkeley actually means.

The Evacuation Time Study is in <https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Evacuation%20Time%20Study.pdf> and posted in the city webpage titled "Study stresses need for household fire and evacuation <https://berkeleyca.gov/community-recreation/news/study-stresses-need-household-fire-and-evacuation-plans>.

I know every time when I leave my friend after a walk in Tilden Park and take the windy neighborhood roads down the hill to pick up Cedar at the top I can't help think that people in the Berkeley hills if they haven't left early as recommended by the Fire Department on high fire risk days, they probably are not going to make it out if there is an actual fire.

The other thought as I look at the overgrown highly flammable vegetation and housing construction as I drive home, the hills could go up in a flash of carelessness.

We really need to do better as a city in preparedness and the Planning Department and ZAB could do a lot more to be proactive to support the Fire Department and safety of all residents and visitors. With being proactive, at the very least staff and ZAB should put projects in the high fire and very high fire zones under action and engage in a discussion of the project and deny any exceptions to setbacks or other requirements and also deny exceptions to recommendations from the fire department.

Have we learned nothing from our history or is it that staff are too young and/or new to have any appreciation of the 1991 Berkeley Oakland Hills firestorm? That was 34 years ago.

kelly hammargren  
Berkeley resident  
District 4