

**Planning Commission
Late Correspondence
Received after 12 noon
Tuesday March 3, 2026**

Late Correspondence

From: Vanessa Brutschy <vanessa.brutschy@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 7:56 PM
To: Horner, Justin; Planning Commission; Corridors; Ramakrishnan, Uttara
Subject: Re: Item 10B: Ad Hoc Committee's Memo on Corridors Upzoning

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.

To Whom It Concerns:

I'd like to thank and appreciate the work and time that has been put into this issue, especially given the feedback from the meeting on 2/4 and the alignment to create the special committee for further evaluation.

I was a student at UCB from 2005-2010. I'm now a permanent resident in Berkeley. I specifically chose this neighborhood when I moved to Berkeley because of the ethos, charm, and historic nature. I chose it because I can attend Alumni events and not be in the middle of the key student housing areas. I can feel safe walking my dog at night, despite being a female with significant hearing loss because of the resident balance.

That said-- Not allowing public comments from folks online is absolutely discriminatory. I choose to attend on Zoom because I have significant hearing loss and I need my home set up to catch everything that's being said. Christian Israelian who spoke this evening also mentioned in this meeting that it is discriminatory to not allow Zoom attendees. Single-handedly picking who can speak is not public comment-- it's censored speech for the sake of being able to argue that the council satisfied the law and procedure.

To the meat of it:

Resident Impact - Why haven't we been consulted yet?

- Safety - Elmwood in particular already has significant issues here due to congestion
- I personally witnessed a pedestrian being hit by a car -- at a 4 way stop nonetheless-- within last month
- Traffic congestion daily, constant concern for pedestrians; double parking and blocking traffic is the current standard. Multiplying that even twofold (2 story building) multiplies the safety risks that are already present.
- No new parking proposed with building height growth, even permit parking is over-assigned at the moment and it's hard to park near my home. If this item goes forward, I will likely move to another neighborhood or city to be able to get to work.
- Affordable housing candidates will not have disposable income to provide businesses, which is in conflict with the argument from the council on 2/4 that this growth will bring more revenue to small business
- Rent increases (property value increase--> rent increase). This is not affordable housing. This is not supporting the community that pays the Council's salary through taxes.

- 2/4 meeting, planning commission stated that Elmwood has a significant amount of historic (1920s-1970s) buildings -- it's the historic culture and neighborhood layout (not the money) which is steering a lot of conversation around Elmwood in particular. Why destroy a historic neighborhood? Aren't those buildings protected?
- Lobbies, stoops -- this would be unused space instead of currently used space. This would also provide more shelter for the unhoused. Is that the affordable housing we're incentivizing?
- "We're open" campaign will not mitigate safety, traffic, parking, commute, or residential impact
- "The level of neighborhood engagement in comments" is cited in the 2/25/2026 Planning Commission Subcommittee Report on Corridors Zoning Update memo. Given that it's only 2 blocks and we still have that level of engagement, doesn't that prove how much this will hurt us?

Arguments From Planning Commission (Lacking):

- Sources from findings not clearly identified
- Long Beach and San Francisco are completely different cities and not proper models for development
- No protection for rent raises for both residents and business owners. Developers will want to recoup their costs, businesses will need to pay more, customers will have less disposable income as the trickle down means higher prices for customers in order for businesses to stay alive
- Incentivizes large corporations (ex: McDonalds) to move in -- does not fit neighborhood ethos
- Large portion of conversation around Elmwood--- why waste everyone's time on 2 blocks? We pay city taxes to pay your wage-- use your time smarter.
- Mismanaged, no transparency, disorganized, no project management or time management. Now it's clearly discriminatory towards public access and engagement.

In conclusion, I recommend that the committee take more time to do research, consult impacted parties and stakeholders, and present realistic options and discussion rather than forcing neighborhoods to be destroyed just so city employees and developers can make money and keep their jobs that we as residents pay for. Consulting stakeholders, providing transparency, and exhibiting servant leadership are key attributes of a Project Management Professional. Given that this hasn't happened, is anyone on this project a Professional per PMI? If not, are we really making informed decisions with the stakeholders-- our residents and small business owners-- or can we agree that this is just a money grab irrespective of implications and impact?

Thank you,
Vanessa Brutschy

Late Correspondence

From: Kate Pocrass <kpocrass@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 2:17 PM
To: All Council; Berkeley Mayor's Office; Planning Commission; Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB)
Subject: NO - commercial rezoning plan!

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.

The change to our zoning laws that the city council is planning is very alarming. The proposed change takes away all the incentive for developers to add affordable housing units in their projects. Density bonuses are important for our city and citizens. You are giving developers what they want over the good of the city and its people. we do not need to rezone these corridors. Under current law you are already building 7-8 story 100% density bonus project where Poulet use to be. It is possible under the current law and will get some low-income housing included at the same time.

This plan is not necessary, if passed will be irreversible under CA law, and will result in less affordable housing being built now, when we need it desperately.

Do not change the zoning laws!

Thank you,

Kate Pocrass
1638 Alcatraz Ave.

Late Correspondence

From: Lezlie <doclezlie@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 11:11 AM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Planning Commission

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.

To whom it may concern,

A city is a community. A community is more than meeting some arbitrary housing quota set "top down" from afar.

A community has gathering places and business people who *belong* in our city as much as the residents, the university and the historical sites.

Hard truth: The human people who dedicate their lives to their businesses and who live in the surrounding neighborhoods are far, far more important to the health and well being of a community than city planners and council people, who come and go like the wind.

Building "high rises" in neighborhoods filled with small businesses, who are also important to all of us families with students and who make our city the good place to live that it is.

STOP THIS war on small businesses and neighborhoods.

It's beneath you:

This policy is:

- Anti- marginalized, immigrant and women owned businesses
- Anti-business people who aren't any of the above
- Anti human-centered planning
- Anti-community building
- Anti- art, literary culture, and creative working people
- Anti-child (in every way possible)
- Anti- wildlife protection
- Anti-health and safety
- Myoptic and -- in actual fact - both ridiculously disrespectful to the people of this community and just plain stupid economically speaking

We are not a place that declared open season for development corporations. Most of whom are slaving at the mouth imagining massive profits to be made in "desirable" neighborhoods of Upper Solano, the Elmwood, and N. Shattuck. In the process, these corporate interests will create places that are no longer "desirable" real estate, or even interesting, but glass and steel canyons without any of the amenities that make a community a community.

Top down planning is anti-community and anti-human.

HANDS OFF Berkeley businesses.

HANDS OFF the parks.

GET OUT of the historic neighborhoods.

It's important.

Yours, Lezlie Kinyon, Voter and Resident

[Coreopsis Journal of Myth & Theatre](#)
[*Roses & Wildflowers*](#)

Late Correspondence

From: Barbara Hadenfeldt <babshad@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 10:45 AM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Amended letter to the Planning Commission

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.

I left out North Shattuck in my previous letter sent yesterday.

For the Planning Commission meeting this evening, March 4, 2026:

With our Mayor and City Council firmly in the grip of a handful of developers, I was heartened to hear some dissenting voices/concerns at the last Planning Commission meeting on February 4. I hope the Ad Hoc committee (Merker, Twu, Owens, and Kahn) have met and have come up with some new perspectives to the destruction of our most viable and successful commercial corridors, Solano Ave, North Shattuck, and the Elmwood.

The Council seems determined to give the developers everything they desire and have abnegated their responsibility to carve out some reasonable conditions that will benefit the small businesses along these corridors and the Berkeley populace that enjoys these charming havens for neighborhood shops. Why do we need new zoning laws? We have plenty of market-rate housing and plenty of less popular commercial areas where adding multi-story residential buildings might be a boon, not a detriment. We need more AFFORDABLE housing, which these changes make less attractive. Clearly the developers are after the most sought-after real estate, with the clearest path to wealth and power.

I hear that the damage is already being done: property owners along Solano and College Aves are putting existing retailers on month-to-month leases, anticipating the new permissive zoning and consequent increases in property values and potential for conglomerate commercial spaces.

One has only to look at downtown Berkeley to see the fruits of development with no guidelines or guardrails. We are left with a hollowed-out core with no public space or civic amenities, a mass of soulless apartment buildings with isolated retail pockets at street level.

I urge the Planning Commission to convince the Council to reconsider these drastic upzoning plans.

Barbara Hadenfeldt
Long-time Berkeley resident

Late Correspondence

From: Eric Hudson <eric.hudson@lmi.net>
Sent: Thursday, March 5, 2026 2:56 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: I oppose proposed commerical corridor rezoning

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 City Planners,

I attended UC Berkeley 1987-1993 and have been a Berkeley resident since 1993. I have been a Berkeley homeowner in the Thousand Oaks neighborhood since 1997. And I have put 3 children through BUSD schools K-12.

I am writing to express concern over proposed changes to zoning in commercial districts including Solano Ave, upper Shattuck, and Elmwood. While I agree there is a need for affordable housing in Berkeley, the current plans are ill-formed and would not require below market rate housing. Furthermore, these changes would likely negatively impact small local businesses in these areas. Such businesses are indeed a large part of the unique character of the city. Center St. is a grim example of how well-intentioned development plans can wipe out small businesses, rob a neighborhood of its character, and create blight.

The recent 'Poulet' project on N. Shattuck shows that development is possible under the current zoning, while maintaining below market rate requirements.

Please don't turn Berkeley into Walnut Creek. Show your vision and leadership by finding housing solutions that maintain and even support the vibrant, quirky, creative spirit of Berkeley.

Respectfully,

Eric Hudson
1820 Catalina Ave

Late Correspondence

From: Debbie Tenenbaum <debbietenenbaum@aol.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 5, 2026 3:09 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Rezoning

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.

We do not need to rezone the corridors. A 100% density bonus project on North Shattuck, where Poulet used to be, was just okayed, showing that it is already possible to develop to the 7-8 story sweet spot under current zoning and get some low-income housing included at the same time. What is the point of allowing developers to build more than existing zoning allows **without having to include anything affordable?**

This plan is not necessary, will result in less affordable housing being built *now*, when we need it, and will be ruinous for the great small businesses that serve our neighborhoods!

Debbie Tenenbaum

Late Correspondence

From: Candace <the.candace@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 6, 2026 2:57 PM
To: Planning Commission; All Council; Humbert, Mark
Subject: Opposition to Upzoning in the Elmwood

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.

To the Planning Commission, City Council, and Mr. Humbert,
We moved to the Elmwood in 2012 because I was so enchanted by College Avenue and easy access to mom and pop shops. I appreciate that it isn't as upscale as Fourth Street, and that it has a mix of town and gown clientele.

The idea that developers could raze these historic storefronts and replace these businesses with soulless chain stores and tall edifices is reflective of poor urban planning. College street is wide enough for 1 lane of traffic in each direction and 2 zones for street parking. The USGBC requires a critical 1:3 ratio of 1'-0" building height to 3'-0" of street width for their 15% of streetfront for their Walkable Streets credit. Walkable streets are known to promote business growth as well as healthier and safer communities. <https://www.usgbc.org/credits/lt7>

The great urbanist, Jane Jacobs, argued for the right of a community to control the makeup of our neighborhoods. My neighbors in Elmwood are incredulous that the city would allow developers to decide the fate of our neighborhood.

As an architect, I am for development and for multi-unit housing in Berkeley. The Senate bills that ensure equal responsibility amongst Californians to provide housing leaves the wisdom of planning to local jurisdictions. We cannot replace the character of these storefronts and businesses. I moved from a new development in Uptown Oakland where the storefronts were vacant for over a decade. To invoke Jacobs again, our cities are safer when they are more vibrant and when there are eyes on the streets. Rather than allowing developers to ruin the character of our neighborhood, let's find ways to preserve what makes it special while encouraging re-use or renovations that add housing.

I've been unable to attend the planning meetings, but I would vociferously object to the Upzoning plans for the Elmwood.

Thank you,
Candace Taira
2609 Webster Street
Berkeley

Late Correspondence

From: Julie C. <madamhipster@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 8, 2026 1:56 PM
To: Planning Commission; All Council; Berkeley Mayor's Office
Subject: Stop Building New Huge Apartments

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.

Greetings Council members & Mayor Ishi,

We must stop new building of large-scale housing projects, at least until the current projects have been completed, *and* we can see the actual results in those neighborhoods. We certainly shouldn't be building large projects in thriving neighborhoods that are already highly congested, such as Solano & College (Elmwood). These projects pretend to provide "affordable housing" but that's not by any means the bulk of what's being built.

"YIMBY" would be OK if it were in fact a grassroots effort, but clearly it isn't. My "backyard" should mean exactly that: ADUs in neighborhoods that provide truly **affordable** housing and that can support the added density.

Thank you.

Julie Chervin

South Berkeley resident for 37 years

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." - *James Baldwin*

Late Correspondence

From: Josie Gerst <josiegerst@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 7, 2026 7:32 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Please no highrises!

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.

What makes berkeley so special is the local shopping districts with small independently owned stores. Please don't destroy that with highrises. Thanks, joel Gerst

Late Correspondence

From: June W. Rader <junewrader@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, March 6, 2026 11:21 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Plans for 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.

First it was Trump disrupting our world, and now this. Berkeley has already gone down hill from what it was in the 50's, 60's, and 70's. Thank goodness that was the prime of my life. Berkeley was a nice little hometown with just about everything you could ask for, along with Albany and El Cerrito. I could shop in great stores, department stores as well as specialty stores. Anything you wanted or needed could be had. There were also theaters, like most of the country still have. It felt safe as well. The schools were good places for my children to go to. Life seemed "normal." But today, I never go to downtown Berkeley. There's nothing there. And the streets—oh what a fiasco they are! It seems like some people think everyone should ride bikes! Let me tell you, that will get old in a hurry unless the population will be all teenagers. And now high risers is the name of the game. Gone already is our quaint little hometown. More is being lost everyday. Sunshine will be harder to partake in because of all the extremely tall buildings. Is it just going to be a suburb of San Francisco? And Solano—please leave that wonderful street alone. It's all we've got left! If I could, I would be looking elsewhere, trying to find another "young" Berkeley to move to. Please think twice before deciding that money is more valuable than quality of life.

Sincerely,
June Rader

Late Correspondence

From: Margots999@sonic.net
Sent: Friday, March 6, 2026 10:01 PM
To: Planning Commission; Klein, Jordan
Subject: Please Improve Corridor Data

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 Planning Commissioners,

I am a long time resident of Berkeley, a retired social scientist; my doctorate is in public health at UC Berkeley. I worked as a researcher for the State health department, Stanford and UC Davis in survey and environmental studies for many years. My publications are online at ResearchGate.net.

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Margot-Smith/research>

At the City Council meeting on November 6th, 2025 I was appalled at the planning department survey presented to the City Council. The questions were poorly constructed and had 1200 respondents who were not described. We could not tell if they were residents of Berkeley, if they were realtors, or anything about them. The planning department presented the results of the survey to the City Council as if it had a great value. As I said at the meeting, the survey should be ignored.

Furthermore, in the Corridor Report presented to the Council, the **Summary of Key Findings** on page 5 provided **NO data**. According to the report, they talked to "Five local real estate brokers/investors/developers, City of Berkeley Office of Economic Development, Save Berkeley Shops Community Organization" period.

We have no way of knowing if these listed are findings or opinions. If truly findings, they should be based on data. But the **Summary of Key Findings** provides no data, so must we assume it is based on the opinions of real estate brokers and an office in the city of Berkeley. The City Council is to make policy based on their opinions?

Summary of Key Findings or opinions?

- There are fewer small businesses operating in Berkeley today than there were ten years ago. *Why? Because of the closing of small downtown businesses? Or?*
- Rezoning is unlikely to drive a spike in rents along the three corridors. *How do we know? No data.*
- Any redevelopment along the corridors will be gradual and limited, *not like downtown?*
- National retail trends, increasing operating costs, and changing consumer preferences are creating challenges that pose bigger threats to small businesses than the corridor rezoning. *Data?*
- Small businesses are likely to benefit from having more people living in the surrounding area, *if they continue to exist after construction and rezoning.*
- The corridor neighborhoods have increasing shares of higher income households, which can be a positive change for small businesses, *if they still exist.*

Data on the cost of developing Berkeley's commercial corridors was also very limited. Not enough information was given about **current** corridor businesses, or the impact of up zoning on existing businesses.

If I were examining commercial corridor development in a manner similar to what I did in my past work, I would first describe the current corridor and then examine how development would affect it and the city. Below are some ideas. City staff could plug in the numbers from data readily available to them.

Current Commercial Corridor Activity

The commercial areas considered for up zoning and increased construction are Solano Avenue, North Shattuck and the Elmwood. All are currently vital commercial areas. Solano Avenue in 2025 paid \$ in sales taxes, \$ in parking funds, and \$ in other income to the city of Berkeley. Below is a table of Berkeley's commercial corridor's substantial financial contributions to the city:

2025 Berkeley Corridor Income

	<u>Solano Ave</u>	<u>No. Shattuck</u>	<u>Elmwood</u>	<u>Total</u>
# Business licenses.	N	N	N	NN
Sales Tax	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Parking Fees	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Property Tax	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Developer Fees	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Other Income	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Totals	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$

The Cost of Development

The possible cost of up zoning the commercial corridors can be seen by examining Berkeley's downtown development. The city has reduced income from downtown development and has many vacant stores.

Berkeley Downtown Development Income

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>total</u>
# Bus. Licenses	N	N	N	N	N
Sales Tax	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Parking Fees	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Property Taxes	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Developer Fees.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Other Income.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Total Income	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

Data indicate that the city's revenues have changed with the downtown development. Revenues have (increased) (decreased) showing that development must be carefully planned to continue funding the city budget and maintain Berkeley's commercial vitality. The development of the Corridors could possibly decrease Berkeley's income.

Vacancy rates in downtown Berkeley can also show the commercial and residential impact of development. Currently, the commercial vacancy rate in new buildings is X, and although apartments are better, they stand at y. High rents in new buildings may explain high vacancy rates. Many owners of these new buildings are corporations. Landlords may keep units vacant rather than lower rents to

avoid reducing the building's valuation for refinancing or sale. Vacancies reduce tax income to the city.

Furthermore, financial conditions change. There are many (17?) stalled projects in the downtown area. We only can look at abandoned Center Street to see the impact of demolition and no construction. Is there any guarantee that this would not occur in the corridors? According to the Summary of Findings, "Any redevelopment along the corridors will be gradual and limited." Is this based on data?

Corridor Development Potential impact on Small Business

Many small business owners in Corridor areas have told the City Council that they are concerned that they will suffer lost revenue during construction, and if their building is demolished, they will not be able to rent at a comparable rate. They commented that they had not been contacted by the city.

The Corridor Report does not provide data on commercial rents. Data helpful to both city planning and business owners are **actual** rents these businesses are paying for their current sites, and **actual** rents charged in newer Berkeley buildings.

Commercial Rents in Berkeley

Size of business _____	< sq ft _____	> sq ft _____
Average Rents in Buildings built since 2010:	\$ _____	\$ _____
Average Rents in Building <2010: _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

From this data, one can see that Corridor business owners have (nothing to fear.) or (have real concerns. These must be addressed by the city, as city revenue will be lost and the vitality of the corridor commercial districts will be lost.) The commercial vitality and city income from corridor districts can be profoundly affected by unrestricted development.

Proposed Housing for Corridor Development

A justification for corridor development is felt to be the need for more housing in Berkeley. Currently, there are X number of housing units in the three corridors. Of these, Y are under rent control. If up zoned, it is possible that as many as X additional housing units could be constructed and many rent controlled buildings demolished. Under current law, no new buildings would be under rent control.

Development of housing could affect housing available to current residents. In 2025, the median rent for older buildings was \$X . To compare, we can examine the housing already constructed in the areas of Berkeley where permitted.

X number of housing units were built in Berkeley since 2010; the 2025 median rent for one bedroom apartments is \$X , which is (higher) (lower) than for buildings built prior to 2010. So, what will be the rent for one bedroom apartments in newly constructed buildings? Will these newer buildings meet the needs of Berkeley renters? How many current residents would be displaced?

Housing for Workers

Building affordable housing is considered desirable for addressing the rental needs of workers by both state and local governments . However, in Alameda County even affordable housing rents are high because affordable housing is based on the Area Median Income. In Alameda County, the Area

Media income is \$159,000; affordable housing is for people making \$100,000 a year; low income housing is 80% or \$80,000, and very low income housing, 50% or \$50,000 a year for single persons.

According to figures from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, average salaries of Alameda County workers show that few can afford "affordable" rents. Management, legal, engineering salaries are more than \$100k a year; education and construction, \$68,000; sales and transportation, about \$40,000. (<https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/06001>) This shows that most workers are Low Income, Very Low Income or Extremely Low Income under affordable housing guide lines. Very few new buildings supply housing for these workers.

According to data from ABAG, Berkeley currently has built 126% of its RHNA housing at market rate and only 16% for low income residents. Housing for workers is lacking.

Housing for Elders

At the February 10th meeting of the Berkeley City Council, the housing developer for 2109 Virginia Street Patrick Kennedy stated "This project is targeting older residents who are interested in downsizing, empty nesters who are interested in downsizing. All of these people have no place to go if they want to stay in Berkeley and they sell their Berkeley house...it will allow legacy Berkeley's to stay in Berkeley instead of moving to Walnut Creek, " He is assuming that his apartments will be attractive to older residents who wish to downsize, however, he presented no data to substantiate this statement.

Berkeley elders have constraints on downsizing. It is likely that their houses are paid for, are taxed under Prop 13, and that their income is fixed. Moving to a Berkeley apartment would mean higher taxes and high payments. If they consider the house to be their family's inheritance, they are not likely to sell.

Home sales in these zip codes 94707 and 94708 numbered 283 in 2024 and 266 in 2025. Information is not available as to the age of the sellers or where they located after sale.

Mr. Kennedy also stated that selling these homes would provide more opportunity for young families to move to Berkeley. Under current conditions, these young families will buy homes of over one million dollars with taxes of about \$15,000 a year. It would be interesting to have data to see if this is occurring.

Furthermore, according to Kennedy, providing apartments for downsizing elders will "liberate a lot of Prop 13 houses and ...generate a huge amount of taxable Berkeley property, around 100 million dollars to the City of Berkeley," Again, Mr. Kennedy made assumptions about where Berkeley elders will locate that he did not substantiate with data.

To provide more information to the city for better planning and to find out if Mr. Kennedy's assumptions are true, the city could survey home sellers for the last 5 years and ask why they sold and where they relocated.

Or, the city could take a carefully sampled survey of 7,629 home owners in zip codes 94707 and 94708 to find out the homeowners' plans. According to the 2020 US Census, over 85% of the homes in zip codes 94707 and 94709 were owner occupied, numbering 7,629 homes. More than half of the population in 2020 were over age 60.

Are the older homeowners planning to downsize? If so, where do they plan to live? In Berkeley, or elsewhere? In assisted living? Are they planning to leave their homes to their families? Will their families inherit their Prop 13 taxes? Data will provide information to the city as to the success of building apartments for elders and whether they should be approved.

Effects of high rent developments

The impact of creating more apartments with high rents needs to be examined. For example, do high rents mean that many apartments are shared? How many apartments are shared by co-tenants? Is there data on the number of people sharing one apartment? What is the vacancy rate of the high rent apartments? Where do working families find housing? Do high rents increase long commutes to work? How do high rents impact Berkeley demographics, age, income levels? Obtaining information on the housing built in the last ten years could provide data on our housing situation.

There are many studies showing that increased homelessness is due to high rents. (Univ. of SF). Yes, Berkeley needs more housing, but housing that meets the needs of its residents.

Buildings possible in the Corridor Areas

The Corridor Report provides data on the types of buildings that could be built and the laws governing density bonuses and other information. Given the lack of data and even misinformation in other parts of the Corridor Report, one may wish to verify these sections.

It is my hope that city departments can supply the figures missing here. It would give the City Council much more information about development and better guide its policies.

Very truly yours,

Margot Smith, Dr.P.H.
1300 A Shattuck Ave
Berkeley, 94709
510-486-8010
510-660-5508 (Text)
Margots999@sonic.net

Late Correspondence

From: M.E. Lawrence <cosmicat9@lmi.net>
Sent: Friday, March 6, 2026 2:27 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Fwd: Proposal for corridor-wide zoning changes in certain Berkeley neighborhoods

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
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----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject: Proposal for corridor-wide zoning changes in certain Berkeley neighborhoods
Date: Fri, 6 Mar 2026 13:10:15 -0800
From: M.E. Lawrence <cosmicat9@lmi.net>
To: Berkeley City Planning <planning@berkeleyca.gov>, Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB) <Planningzab@berkeleyca.gov>
CC: Berkeley Mayor <mayor@berkeleyca.gov>, Berkeley All Councilmembers <council@berkeleyca.gov>, Berkeley City Manager <CManager@berkeleyca.gov>, Build a Better Berkeley <info@buildabetterberkeley.org>

<https://www.berkeleyside.org/2026/03/06/berkeley-corridors-zoning-update-planning-commission-solano-college-shattuck-elmwood>

"Though the commission did not vote on a recommendation, most members said they want Berkeley to set a seven-story height limit for the identified properties on the northern blocks of Shattuck Avenue, six stories for those on Solano Avenue and four for those on College Avenue in the Elmwood."

Yeah, right. We heard that story a decade or two ago about downtown, which was never the most charming of business districts, but once pretty decent. Now we see the usual Cal students, who seldom have a stake in the city's future, plus ludicrously overscaled developments, empty shopfronts, and the homeless and/or mentally ill: too much money and too little. (But plenty of trash.)

Let's preserve the small businesses and pleasant atmosphere of Solano, North Shattuck and the Elmwood. (That's where we now do most of our shopping, not downtown.)

Yours truly,

Melanie Lawrence & John Smail

Property owners in District 4 since 1996; residents there since 1980

Late Correspondence

From: ReCheng Tsang <recheng@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 6, 2026 2:09 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Elmwood development: opposition

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> The Elmwood is a much beloved historic district that reflects the best that Berkeley has to offer - small businesses, unique in their offerings, providing a place for people to congregate and celebrate life. It's a treasure for the entire city, not just the immediate neighbors. Business districts like this are exactly why people want to live in Berkeley. Why would we ever consider destroying it? The city's own consultants have acknowledged that there's no way that we can build apartment buildings there and expect developers will take the steps necessary to retain a thriving business district.

>

> Beyond that — it is also a narrow, 2 lane street - and one of the most congested intersections in the city. Anyone who drives down Ashby or College at 5pm on a weekday would know that it's insanity to introduce a flood of additional cars and humans. When we consider the broad availability of plots/neighborhoods in the city that would actually benefit from new development — this effort just makes no sense. Why these two blocks? Why not Claremont or Telegraph? The lack of wisdom in this choice feels not only imprudent — honestly, it feels suspect.

>

> We should all be fighting to preserve the “amenities” which the City Council has argued need to be made accessible to all. Please, please, please — help us in this effort.

>

> Best Regards,

ReCheng Tsang
<http://rechengtsang.com>

Late Correspondence

From: Susie Zukor <susiezukor@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, March 5, 2026 6:53 PM
To: Planning Commission
Cc: All Council
Subject: Remove the Elmwood from the Upzoning Discussions

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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.

I am very opposed to the buildings in the Elmwood being torn down. I chose my home for its proximity to the Elmwood shopping district. The historic street is a wonderful place to walk, shop and eat. It is definitely a much more inviting neighborhood than Downtown Berkeley where new and unattractive buildings have stripped the area of any character.

I do not understand what the city council is doing. Why would you destroy another area in Berkeley? Why tear down what is attractive to residents and tourists alike? I believe the value of my home would drop with the planned destruction of the Elmwood. It would become just another area where developers tear down beautiful buildings and create ugly cheap and overly large buildings.

Thank you,

Susie Zukor

Late Correspondence

From: Judy Beelaar <judy@judybeelaar.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 5, 2026 9:56 AM
To: Planning Commission
Cc: All Council; Humbert, Mark
Subject: The Elmwood - Please remove it from the upcoming plan

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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Dawn Thomas says it well:

> "The Elmwood is a much beloved historic district that reflects the best that Berkeley has to offer - small businesses, unique in their offerings, providing a place for people to congregate and celebrate life. It's a treasure for the entire city, not just the immediate neighbors. Business districts like this are exactly why people want to live in Berkeley. Why would we ever consider destroying it? The city's own consultants have acknowledged that there's no way that we can build apartment buildings there and expect developers will take the steps necessary to retain a thriving business district.

>

> Beyond that — it is also a narrow, 2 lane street - and one of the most congested intersections in the city. Anyone who drives down Ashby or College at 5pm on a weekday would know that it's insanity to introduce a flood of additional cars and humans. When we consider the broad availability of plots/neighborhoods in the city that would actually benefit from new development — this effort just makes no sense. Why these two blocks? Why not Claremont or Telegraph? The lack of wisdom in this choice feels not only imprudent — honestly, it feels suspect.

>

> We should all be fighting to preserve the "amenities" which the City Council has argued need to be made accessible to all. Please, please, please — help us in this effort. "

I add my plea to hers. Having lived in the Elmwood for 46 years I know (and love) it well. And Mark, you are our City Council rep. Please support our efforts!

Judith Beelaar

Late Correspondence

From: Crystal Brunzell <crystalbrunzell@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 5, 2026 9:28 AM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Remove the Elmwood from upzoning

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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.

Hello,

Please don't upzone the Elmwood. College ave. Would be destroyed by planned development. This is an area of small businesses that thrive on pedestrian traffic. It's a two block area on a two lane street that is already congested with traffic. Large development will take away the historic and charming feel of the neighborhood.

There are so many more areas nearby that would be better suited for tall developments. Telegraph is begging for an upgrade. We need to make intelligent, thoughtful decisions about development and building out two blocks of the Elmwood is neither.

Thank you,

Crystal Brunzell
3011 Hillegass ave

Late Correspondence

From: Susie Zukor <susiezukor@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, March 5, 2026 7:50 AM
To: Planning Commission
Cc: All Council
Subject: Remove the Elmwood from the Upzoning Discussions

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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I am very opposed to the buildings in the Elmwood being torn down. I chose my home for its proximity to the Elmwood shopping district. The historic street is a wonderful place to walk, shop and eat. It is definitely a much more inviting neighborhood than Downtown Berkeley where new and unattractive buildings have stripped the area of any character.

I do not understand what the city council is doing. Why would you destroy another area in Berkeley? Why tear down what is attractive to residents and tourists alike? I believe the value of my home would drop with the planned destruction of the Elmwood. It would become just another area where developers tear down beautiful buildings and create ugly cheap and overly large buildings.

Thank you,

Susie Zukor

Late Correspondence

From: Esther Lerman <estherlermanmft@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 11:04 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: re: Re-zoning the corridors

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Flag Status: Flagged

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.

To the Planning Commission:

Please do not re-zone the commercial corridors on Shattuck, College, Solano and San Pablo Aves.

Also:

We do not need to rezone the corridors. A 100% density bonus project on North Shattuck, showing that it is already possible to develop to the 7-8 story sweet spot under current zoning and get some low-income housing included at the same time. What is the point of allowing developers to build more than existing zoning allows **without having to include anything affordable?**

This plan is not necessary, will result in less affordable housing being built *now*, when we need it, and will be ruinous for the great small businesses that serve our neighborhoods!

Thank you,
Esther Lerman
Elmwood resident (for 50 years)

Late Correspondence

From: Mary Barlow <mbarlow226@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 8:38 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: New zoning

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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.

This idea of putting high rises everywhere in Berkeley is insanity driven by greed. You will change the entire nature of this town and ruin it altogether. Please don't do this !

Late Correspondence

From: Carolyn Scott <carolynmuire@mac.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 6:39 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: new film for CA mandate issues

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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 Berkeley Planning Committee Members,

I hope this note finds you well. I understand that your committee is currently navigating up-zoning challenges, particularly in response to California's state mandates.

Our award-winning documentary, *Small Is Beautiful*, explores the challenges faced by a small rural California community striving to protect a wildlife sanctuary and its way of life from a massive development. The film highlights how California housing mandates, often presented as "affordable," in reality drive developments that are **88% luxury and far from affordable**, raising questions about the balance between growth and community needs. Set against the backdrop of California's growing wildfire risks, the film examines the delicate balance between urban expansion, climate resilience, and environmental preservation.

Small Is Beautiful has screened internationally and won numerous awards. We are now offering it as a **fundraising and educational tool** for local nonprofits, environmental organizations, and educational institutions. Screenings can be paired with discussions, community events, or donor gatherings, with proceeds benefiting the host organization.

I believe this film could resonate with your community, stakeholders, and planning initiatives. I would be delighted to share a trailer, provide more details, or discuss screening possibilities at your convenience.

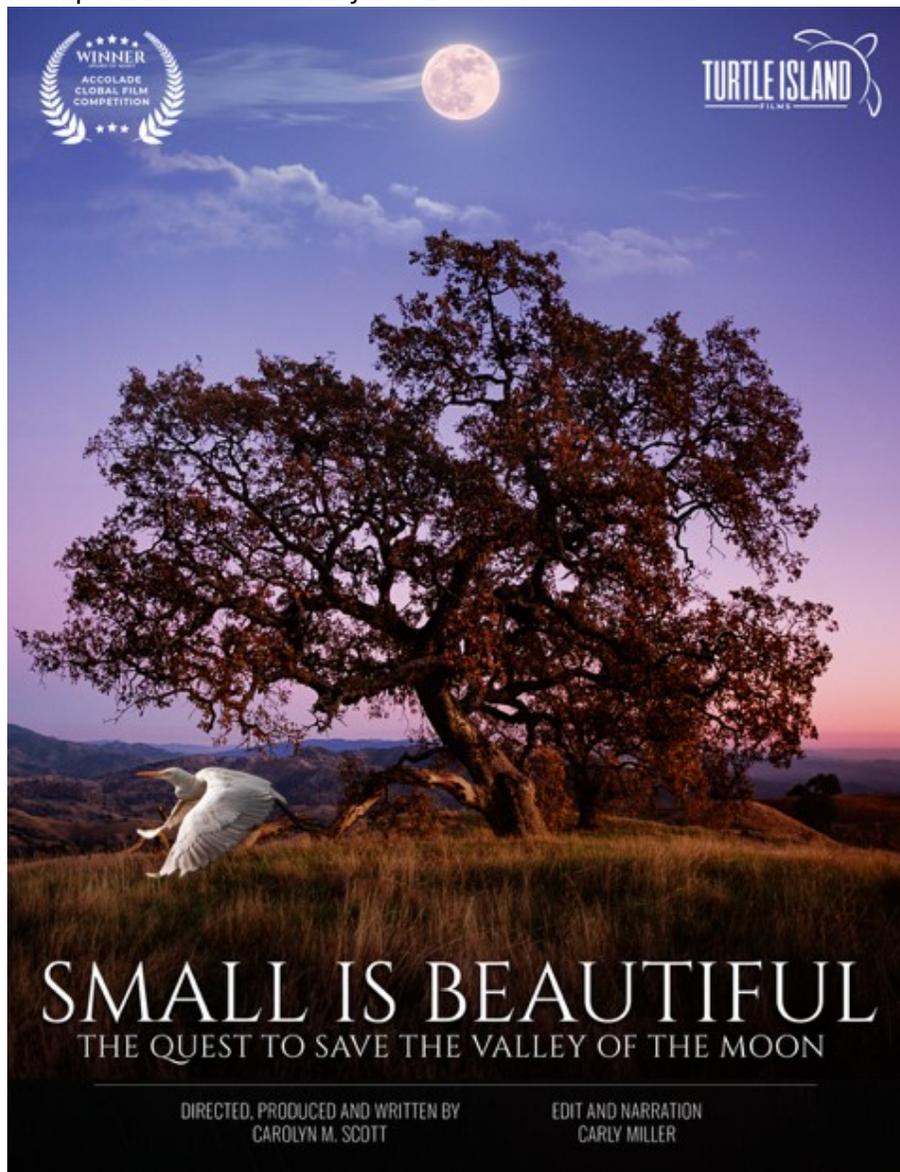
Thank you for the important work you do for Berkeley, and for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,
Carolyn M. Scott

About the Filmmaker

Carolyn M. Scott is an Emmy-nominated filmmaker and recipient of the National Women's History Project's Women Taking the Lead to Save the Planet award. Her previous film TEXAS GOLD aired on Sundance Channel and aired on Natural Heroes, a public-television series distributed nationwide that spotlights grassroots environmental activism and screened at over 30 international festivals winning

multiple Best Documentary and Best of Fest Awards.



Late Correspondence

From: Elizabeth Snowden <wliam@pacbell.net>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 6:18 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Corridor plan

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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To the members of the Planning Commission,

We are writing to express our hope that you revisit the corridor plan, and decide against anything higher than a modest and context friendly 3 stories. As pointed out by several planners, the same amount of housing could be produced by more low rise buildings spread out over the corridor area.

Also, it is pretty shocking that a plan that will destroy the popular and well-visited corridors will produce only market rate (expensive) housing, which is already generously supplied.

Thank you for your attention,

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Snowden
Charles P Smith

Late Correspondence

From: Chandra Easton <chandra.easton@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 5:34 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: No high rises on Solano

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Hello,

I've lived here for 23 years and love the feeling of Solano Avenue. The traffic will be horrible and views will be ruined. This must not happen.

Thank you.

Take care,
Chandra
www.chandraeaston.com
805.896.6654

(she/her/hers)

Why I put my pronouns on my email signature and you should too

*Written from unceded ancestral homelands of the Lisjan Ohlone people, for which I pay **Shuumi Land Tax** as an inadequate token of reparation.*

Sent from my iPhone, please excuse typos.

Late Correspondence

From: Elissa Kittner <elissakittner@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 4:19 PM
To: Planning Commission; All Council
Cc: Humbert, Mark
Subject: Please REMOVE THE ELMWOOD from the Upzoning Discussion

Importance: High

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up

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Hello,

Please remove the Elmwood from the Upzoning Discussion. It doesn't make sense.

Thank you, Elissa

Elissa Kittner
elissa.kittner@gmail.com
510.708.3090

Late Correspondence

From: Jane Maxwell <jmax@well.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 3:12 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Corridor Plan

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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.

The proposed Corridor Plan should not be accepted. It will result in less affordable housing being built now, which is when we need it. And it will be terrible for the small businesses now flourishing on these Corridors.

Late Correspondence

From: Allan Abshez <allanabshez@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 2:52 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: March 4, Agenda Item 10B - Please distribute the attached correspondence to the Planning Commission
Attachments: City Council Letter.pdf
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November 5, 2025

City Council
City of Berkeley
2180 Milvia Street
Berkeley, California 94704

Re: November 6, 2025 Work Session; Special Meeting Item 1; College Avenue Project Area

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

I am writing to oppose the potential rezoning of College Avenue Project Area. The City of Berkeley has made many planning mistakes in the past years, including adopting no-growth policies that, over many decades, contributed to California's housing and affordability crisis. But in its ardor to compensate for those mistakes, the City Council should not make another mistake: Destroying the heart and soul of the Southside Berkeley community by rezoning the College Avenue Project Area under either of the alternatives outlined in the Staff Report.

I am a resident of Council District 8, a supporter of well-planned housing growth, and a housing industry professional. Specifically, I am a graduate of the Berkeley School of Law with over 40 years of experience as a land use lawyer and litigator. Over the last several decades, my practice has been focused on procuring entitlements for infill multi-family housing, including mixed-use projects, 100% below-market projects, density bonus projects, and permanent supportive housing projects. I also have extensive experience in the implementation and enforcement of Density Bonus Law, the Housing Accountability Act, Housing Element Law, and the various housing and streamlining reform statutes recently enacted by the California legislature. In the course of my legal practice, I have been responsible for securing the entitlement of many, many thousands of urban infill housing units across California – routinely in the face of community or city hall resistance. I have also served as a City Planning Commissioner, a Historic Preservation Commissioner, and I currently serve as a member of the City of Berkeley's Parks Recreation and Waterfront Commission.

The College Avenue Project Area should not be rezoned for the following primary reasons:

1. The College Avenue Project Area is the Heart and Soul of South Berkeley

Berkeley has only a few areas that can fairly be described as vibrant community centers. The College Project Area, which is comprised of a small stretch of College Avenue commonly known as the 'Elmwood District' is one of the few. Because of its unique character, the Elmwood District serves more than its immediate neighborhood surroundings; it also draws persons from outside of the area and from outside of Berkeley.

What gives the District its character and importance are the pedestrian-oriented commercial and retail tenant spaces that are available there, as well as the particular mom and pop businesses that occupy them. If the current buildings comprising the District are redeveloped for mixed-use purposes these tenant spaces and the businesses that occupy them will be permanently lost due to economics of real estate development. That is, the construction of new mixed use buildings will impose costs on ground floor retail that the character of current tenants cannot afford. Indeed, as the Planning Commission observed, the ground floor retail spaces of new mixed use construction around Berkeley are often unoccupied. The reason is that developers routinely underwrite and finance new mixed-use projects assuming that ground floor retail – even where promised to the local jurisdiction - will not be occupied.

2. Mixed Use Development of the College Avenue Project Area is Not Necessary to Achieve the City's RHNA Commitments

Rezoning of the College Avenue Project Area is not necessary to meet the City's housing commitments. The City's recently adopted Housing Element documents that the City's RHNA commitments can not only be met, but exceeded – in all income categories - with sites throughout the City that are currently zoned for infill development. See Housing Element Update 2023-2031, Table C-10 Opportunity Sites - No Rezone Required. Simply stated, there is no need to upset the delicate balance on which the vibrancy of the Elmwood District depends or its function as a community center. The City can more than comfortably achieve its housing objectives without rezoning the College Avenue Project Area.

3. The Small Number of Units Estimated to Be Added By Rezoning The College Avenue Project Area Does Not Justify Inviting the Destruction of the Elmwood District Community Center

Both the Staff and Consultant Reports concede that College Avenue is differentiated from the other Project Areas by the fact that College Avenue is only 60 feet wide, that it is lined by shallow commercial lots, and that it carries a heavy university commuting traffic burden.

The Staff Report also concedes that less than 1 acre of the College Avenue Project Area has high redevelopment potential (basically three sites – 7 Eleven, Wells Fargo Parking Lot, Post Office). This conclusion should end the discussion of whether to proceed with rezoning of the entire Elmwood District. The amount of housing that is likely to be generated by rezoning the Project Area – particularly the very small amount of below-market housing that is likely to be included – cannot justify enabling random redevelopment of the rest of the District and the consequent loss of the heart and soul of Elmwood. The individual lots that have high redevelopment potential can be upzoned without rezoning the remainder of the Project Area because they are physically differentiated from the remainder of the Project Area (specifically because they are each substantially developed with surface parking lots).

4. The City Cannot Require that Existing Tenants be Returned

As discussed earlier, the economics of new construction of mixed-use projects would inevitably impose much higher rent and costs upon ground floor tenants of new construction. Such rents and costs are beyond the capability of the retail tenants that currently comprise the District. While those tenants would be evicted, the City Attorney will confirm that California law would not permit the City to require that they be accommodated in new construction at their previously existing rents, or indeed at all. Thus, whatever the good intentions of planners might be, as properties within the College Avenue Project Area are redeveloped, the character of existing tenants and businesses that give the District its character and vitality would inevitably be lost.

5. Density Bonus Law Would Enable Policies and Regulations Intended to Mitigate Community Concerns to be Waived at a Developer's Request

The Staff Report contains extensive discussion of potential regulatory conditions that might be placed on the rezoning of the College Avenue Project Area to address community concerns (e.g., design concerns, tenant protection concerns). However, the City Attorney will confirm that Density Bonus Law enables the waiver of such regulatory protections at a developer's request on a practically unlimited basis. Specifically, pursuant to Density Bonus Law, a developer is entitled to receive an enumerated number of incentives/concessions, and an unlimited number of waivers of development standards.

Concessions and incentives, as defined under Density Bonus law, allow a developer to deviate from design standards and/or development regulations when such regulations

potentially make the project economically infeasible for the developer to build. Incentives/concessions include “[a] reduction in site development standards or a modification of zoning code requirements or architectural design requirements ... that result in identifiable and actual cost reductions, to provide for affordable housing costs.”

“Development standards” includes a site or construction condition, including, but not limited to, a height limitation, a setback requirement, a floor area ratio, an onsite open-space requirement, or a parking ratio that applies to a residential development pursuant to any ordinance, general plan element, specific plan, charter, or other local condition, law, policy, resolution, or regulation. [Gov. Code §65915(o)(1)]. As explained in HCD’s guidance (<https://www.hcd.ca.gov/sites/default/files/docs/planning-and-community/HAU/glendale-hau-346-ta-02052024.pdf>):

“A development project meeting the requirements of the SDBL is entitled to not only an increase in the number of units allowed on the site (i.e., a “density bonus”), but also to a prescribed number of concessions/incentives and any development standard waivers which are necessary to facilitate the project overall.” (emphasis added)

The burden is on the City to justify a denial of a waiver or concession, and attorney’s fees/costs are available to developers whose requests are wrongfully denied. Therefore, a requirement that ground floor retail be included as part of a density bonus project is a “development standard” could be waived at the developer’s request. Similarly, design requirements such as height limitations, setback requirements, open space requirements, could all be waived as part of a density bonus project.

Simply put, where density bonus projects are concerned, the City cannot count on the enforcement of any regulatory requirement unless its waiver would result in a specific, adverse impact on public health, safety, or on any property listed in the California Register of Historic Resources.

Conclusion

Proceeding further with rezoning the College Avenue Project Area is ill advised. The Elmwood District is one of the few areas of Berkeley that can fairly be described as a vibrant community center. Its current commercial and retail character serves not only the immediate neighborhoods around it, but also draws persons from outside of the area and from outside of Berkeley. Rezoning the Elmwood District is not necessary to meet the City’s RHNA objectives. The Staff Report concedes that College Avenue is physically differentiated and that only three properties are suitable for redevelopment (less than 1 acre of the Project Area). Very few units – especially below-market units – would be generated by redevelopment of the Project Area. The three properties that have been identified as having a high redevelopment potential can be upzoned without upzoning the remainder of the Project Area. Enabling random redevelopment of other properties in the District would cause the permanent loss of existing tenancies and existing businesses as a result of the increased rents and costs that would be associated with new development. And finally, whatever planning and zoning controls the the City adopted to mitigate community concerns regarding design and character concerns could be waived pursuant to density bonus law at a developer’s request.

Respectfully submitted,



Allan Abshez

cc: Councilmember Mark Humbert
Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager
Jordan Klein, Director of Planning

Late Correspondence

From: Sarah Fishleder <sarah.fishleder@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 2:16 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Public Comment for March 4 Mtg

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
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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.

Planning Commissioners,

I am a long time Berkeley resident, a trained city planner and a real estate consultant. I love living in Berkeley, but I am concerned about the mix of businesses that Berkeley can attract, support, and grow in the commercial corridors of the city. The Corridors Zoning Update should consider the overall storefront vacancy rate throughout the city and how to financially support new and existing small businesses that cannot afford to locate in the unfinished shells at the ground level of the new commercial apartment buildings throughout the city.

While the analysis to date attempts to consider small business displacement and characteristics of store frontage in the subject areas considered in the Corridors Zoning Update, the analysis does not adequately take into consideration the high vacancy in the ground level retail at the many newly built apartment buildings throughout Berkeley. It is important to preserve the commercial corridors on Solano, Elmwood, and North Shattuck, and also support new businesses and the vitality of other commercial corridors in the city.

The new apartment buildings in the South Shattuck area, Downtown, and West Berkeley have high vacancy rates. On the one hand, these spaces are expensive to build out for small, unique businesses, and on the other hand are not important to the financial success of the building. The apartment buildings are getting a return on their investment because they are building and renting out apartments in a desirable city. These companies build the ground level retail because it is required, but actually renting out the spaces and helping small businesses grow is not a priority. The only companies that can afford to locate in these empty shells are large corporations. As market factors improve, the city will be inundated with generic businesses that one can find in the city and Berkeley will lose its uniqueness.

The Corridors Zoning Update has many admirable goals but it does not address the city-wide vacancy issues which will be made worse by the proposed changes. Before jumping ahead with the Corridors Zoning Update, the city needs to establish a financial framework to support new small businesses, the expansion of existing small businesses, and a meaningful way to offset the high costs to locate in the existing, vacant ground level retail that has been created by the newer apartment buildings. The work done by Strategic Economic and Raimi Associates is a strong starting point, but we need to address all of the vacant storefronts and not just the potential impact of upzoning the prime corridors in the city.

Thank you for your consideration,
Sarah Fishleder

Late Correspondence

From: Margots999@sonic.net
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 2:13 PM
To: Planning Commission; Klein, Jordan
Subject: Please Improve Corridor Data

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
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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 Planning Commissioners,

I am a long time resident of Berkeley, a retired social scientist; my doctorate is in public health at UC Berkeley. I worked as a researcher for the State health department, Stanford and UC Davis in survey and environmental studies for many years. My publications are online at ResearchGate.net.

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Margot-Smith/research>

At the City Council meeting on November 6th, 2025 I was appalled at the planning department survey presented to the City Council. The questions were poorly constructed and had 1200 respondents who were not described. We could not tell if they were residents of Berkeley, if they were realtors, or anything about them. The planning department presented the results of the survey to the City Council as if it had a great value. As I said at the meeting, the survey should be ignored.

Furthermore, in the Corridor Report presented to the Council, the **Summary of Key Findings** on page 5 provided **NO data**. According to the report, they talked to "Five local real estate brokers/investors/developers, City of Berkeley Office of Economic Development, Save Berkeley Shops Community Organization" period.

We have no way of knowing if these listed are findings or opinions. If truly findings, they should be based on data. But the **Summary of Key Findings** provides no data, so must we assume it is based on the opinions of real estate brokers and an office in the city of Berkeley. The City Council is to make policy based on their opinions?

Summary of Key Findings or opinions?

- There are fewer small businesses operating in Berkeley today than there were ten years ago. *Why? Because of the closing of small downtown businesses? Or?*
- Rezoning is unlikely to drive a spike in rents along the three corridors. *How do we know? No data.*
- Any redevelopment along the corridors will be gradual and limited, *not like downtown?*
- National retail trends, increasing operating costs, and changing consumer preferences are creating challenges that pose bigger threats to small businesses than the corridor rezoning. *Data?*
- Small businesses are likely to benefit from having more people living in the surrounding area, *if they continue to exist after construction and rezoning.*
- The corridor neighborhoods have increasing shares of higher income households, which can be a positive change for small businesses, *if they still exist.*

Data on the cost of developing Berkeley's commercial corridors was also very limited. Not enough information was given about **current** corridor businesses, or the impact of up zoning on existing businesses.

If I were examining commercial corridor development in a manner similar to what I did in my past work, I would first describe the current corridor and then examine how development would affect it and the city. Below are some ideas:

Current Commercial Corridor Activity

The commercial areas considered for up zoning and increased construction are Solano Avenue, North Shattuck and the Elmwood. All are currently vital commercial areas. Solano Avenue in 2025 paid \$ in sales taxes, \$ in parking funds, and \$ in other income to the city of Berkeley. Below is a table of Berkeley's commercial corridor's substantial financial contributions to the city:

<u>2025 Berkeley Corridor Income</u>				
	<u>Solano Ave</u>	<u>North Shattuck</u>	<u>Elmwood</u>	<u>Total</u>
# Business licenses.	N	N	N	NN
Sales Tax	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Parking Fees	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Property Tax	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Developer Fees	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Other Income	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Totals	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$

The Cost of Development

The possible cost of up zoning the commercial corridors can be seen by examining Berkeley's downtown development. The city has reduced income from downtown development and has many vacant stores.

Berkeley Downtown Development Income					
	<u>2010</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>total</u>
# Bus. Licenses	N	N	N	N	N
Sales Tax	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Parking Fees	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Property Taxes	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Developer Fees.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Other Income.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Total Income	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

Data indicate that the city's revenues have changed with the downtown development. Revenues have (increased) (decreased) showing that development must be carefully planned to continue funding the city budget and maintain Berkeley's commercial vitality. The development of the Corridors could possibly decrease Berkeley's income.

Vacancy rates in downtown Berkeley can also show the commercial and residential impact of development. Currently, the commercial vacancy rate in new buildings is X, and although apartments are better, they stand at y. High rents in new buildings may explain high vacancy rates. Many owners of these new buildings are corporations. Landlords may keep units vacant rather than lower rents to avoid reducing the building's valuation for refinancing or sale. Vacancies reduce tax income to the city.

Furthermore, financial conditions change. There are many (17?) stalled projects in the downtown area. We only can look at abandoned Center Street to see the impact of demolition and no construction. Is there any guarantee that this would not occur in the corridors? According to the Summary of Findings, "Any redevelopment along the corridors will be gradual and limited." Is this based on data?

Corridor Development Potential impact on Small Business

Many small business owners in Corridor areas have told the City Council that they are concerned that they will suffer lost revenue during construction, and if their building is demolished, they will not be able to rent at a comparable rate. They commented that they had not been contacted by the city.

The Corridor Report does not provide data on commercial rents. Data helpful to both city planning and business owners are **actual** rents these businesses are paying for their current sites, and **actual** rents charged in newer Berkeley buildings.

Commercial Rents in Berkeley

Size of business _____	< sq ft _____	> sq ft _____
Average Rents in Buildings built since 2010:	\$ _____	\$ _____
Average Rents in Building <2010: _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

From this data, one can see that Corridor business owners have (nothing to fear.) or (have real concerns. These must be addressed by the city, as city revenue will be lost and the vitality of the corridor commercial districts will be lost.) The commercial vitality and city income from corridor districts can be profoundly affected by unrestricted development.

Proposed Housing for Corridor Development

A justification for corridor development is felt to be the need for more housing in Berkeley. Currently, there are X number of housing units in the three corridors. Of these, Y are under rent control. If up zoned, it is possible that as many as X additional housing units could be constructed and many rent controlled buildings demolished. Under current law, no new buildings would be under rent control.

Development of housing could affect housing available to current residents. In 2025, the median rent for older buildings was \$X . To compare, we can examine the housing already constructed in the areas of Berkeley where permitted.

X number of housing units were built in Berkeley since 2010; the 2025 median rent for one bedroom apartments is \$X , which is (higher) (lower) than for buildings built prior to 2010. So, what will be the rent for one bedroom apartments in newly constructed buildings? Will these newer buildings meet the needs of Berkeley renters? How many current residents would be displaced?

Housing for Workers

Building affordable housing is considered desirable for addressing the rental needs of workers by both state and local governments. However, in Alameda County even affordable housing rents are high because affordable housing is based on the Area Median Income. In Alameda County, the Area Median Income is \$159,000; affordable housing is for people making \$100,000 a year; low income housing is 80% or \$80,000, and very low income housing, 50% or \$50,000 a year for single persons.

According to figures from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, average salaries of Alameda County workers show that few can afford "affordable" rents. Management, legal, engineering salaries are more than \$100k a year; education and construction, \$68,000; sales and transportation, about \$40,000. (<https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/06001>) This shows that most workers are Low Income, Very Low Income or Extremely Low Income under affordable housing guide lines. Very few new buildings supply housing for these workers.

According to data from ABAG, Berkeley currently has built 126% of its RHNA housing at market rate and only 16% for low income residents. Housing for workers is lacking.

Housing for Elders

At the February 10th meeting of the Berkeley City Council, the housing developer for 2109 Virginia Street Patrick Kennedy stated "This project is targeting older residents who are interested in downsizing, empty nesters who are interested in downsizing. All of these people have no place to go if they want to stay in Berkeley and they sell their Berkeley house...it will allow legacy Berkeley's to stay in Berkeley instead of moving to Walnut Creek," He is assuming that his apartments will be attractive to older residents who wish to downsize, however, he presented no data to substantiate this statement.

Berkeley elders have constraints on downsizing. It is likely that their houses are paid for, are taxed under Prop 13, and that their income is fixed. Moving to a Berkeley apartment would mean higher taxes and high payments. If they consider the house to be their family's inheritance, they are not likely to sell.

Home sales in these zip codes 94707 and 94708 numbered 283 in 2024 and 266 in 2025. Information is not available as to the age of the sellers or where they located after sale.

Mr. Kennedy also stated that selling these homes would provide more opportunity for young families to move to Berkeley. Under current conditions, these young families will buy homes of over one million dollars with taxes of about \$15,000 a year. It would be interesting to have data to see if this is occurring.

Furthermore, according to Kennedy, providing apartments for downsizing elders will "liberate a lot of Prop 13 houses and ...generate a huge amount of taxable Berkeley property, around 100 million dollars to the City of Berkeley," Again, Mr. Kennedy made assumptions about where Berkeley elders will locate that he did not substantiate with data.

To provide more information to the city for better planning and to find out if Mr. Kennedy's assumptions are true, the city could survey home sellers for the last 5 years and ask why they sold and where they relocated.

Or, the city could take a carefully sampled survey of 7,629 home owners in zip codes 94707 and 94708 to find out the homeowners' plans. According to the 2020 US Census, over 85% of the homes

in zip codes 94707 and 94709 were owner occupied, numbering 7,629 homes. More than half of the population in 2020 were over age 60.

Are the older homeowners planning to downsize? If so, where do they plan to live? In Berkeley, or elsewhere? In assisted living? Are they planning to leave their homes to their families? Will their families inherit their Prop 13 taxes? Data will provide information to the city as to the success of building apartments for elders and whether they should be approved.

Effects of high rent developments

The impact of creating more apartments with high rents needs to be examined. For example, do high rents mean that many apartments are shared? How many apartments are shared by co-tenants? Is there data on the number of people sharing one apartment? What is the vacancy rate of the high rent apartments? Where do working families find housing? Do high rents increase long commutes to work? How do high rents impact Berkeley demographics, age, income levels? Obtaining information on the housing built in the last ten years could provide data on our housing situation.

There are many studies showing that increased homelessness is due to high rents. (Univ. of SF). Yes, Berkeley needs more housing, but housing that meets the needs of its residents.

Buildings possible in the Corridor Areas

The Corridor Report provides data on the types of buildings that could be built and the laws governing density bonuses and other information. Given the lack of data and even misinformation in other parts of the Corridor Report, one may wish to verify these sections.

It is my hope that city departments can supply the figures missing here. It would give the City Council much more information about development and better guide its policies.

Very truly yours,

Margot Smith, Dr.P.H.
1300 A Shattuck Ave
Berkeley, 94709
510-486-8010
510-660-5508 (Text)
Margots999@sonic.net

Late Correspondence

From: Born, Stephen <Stephen.Born@ucsf.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 1:05 PM
To: Planning Commission; Berkeley Mayor's Office; Humbert, Mark
Subject: Could we have some common sense development plans for the Elmwood, North Shattuck and Solano?

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

Planners and councilmembers should not destroy Berkeley but this is what is on track with current development plans in the Elmwood, Solano and North Shattuck. Current plans to rezone these corridors will destroy the few independent business that remain in Berkeley. Developers will blight these neighborhoods with unneeded market rate housing and increase the traffic in all city streets. It will transform these areas into a blighted zone much like downtown Berkeley.

I demand that all council members stop taking donations from developers. The city council has massive conflicts of interest in supporting developers. Such corruption benefits the political elite at the expense of the city voters and taxpayers.

Sincerely,

Stephen Born

Late Correspondence

From: joel@casahopkins.com
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 9:14 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Keep affordable housing. Not the CZU!

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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 Commissioners,

The one thing I think we all agree on, is that we need more affordable housing. Currently, with a 3-story height limit, a building of 8 stories on Virginia street was approved because in order to build to that height, it was **forced** by the state density bonus law to provide **some** affordable housing. I am truly mystified as to why you want to effectively get rid of that affordable housing mandate, by changing the corridor zoning. If you do that, developers will be able to build to whatever heights are allowed, be it 4,5,6,or 7 stories— **without including anything affordable.**

Right now—**If affordable housing is included**—developers can easily build to **whatever heights are being proposed for this rezoning. You don't need to propose any corridor rezoning to do this!** We need **affordable** housing. We don't *need* more market rate housing. But if developers want to build it under current zoning, fine. **Just include some affordable housing in the mix.**

If you are going to claim that if we build enough market rate housing, we will get affordable housing via trickle down or “filtering”, show me some evidence that it will work in less than 100 years.

If your aim in rezoning is to end up with buildings **much higher** than the 7-8 stories developers can get now, with the density bonus under current zoning, tell us! Don't hide it. If your desired goal is that by zoning for a 6-story height limit on Shattuck you will get buildings higher than 20 stories if affordable housing is included, tell us why that would be a good thing for Shattuck Ave. Because that is what has happened recently at 2029 University, where a lot zoned for 7 stories will now have a 23-story building on it. Don't tell us the 100% density bonus will never happen. It does and it has and it will.

We don't need the density bonus!

Regards,
Joel Myerson
joelcob@casahopkins.com

Late Correspondence

From: Elizabeth A. <eraden@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 7:29 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Please retain commercial stores at ground level in Berkeley

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

As I understand it, the proposed new construction wants to eliminate ground level stores in favor of residential high rises. Please retain ground level stores so that we continue to be safe at night, retain our community and conveniences (which is what Europe does very successfully). Solely residential areas are dead at night and often dangerous while places that offer restaurants, bars, and stores are much safer and alive.

I understand the desire for more housing but make it mixed.

Many thanks.

Best regards,
Betsy

Elizabeth R. Aden, PhD
Mud, Microbes, and Medicine (coming April 21, 2026)
The Goldilocks Genome--Available on Audible
Amazon Best Seller -- Medical Fiction
Winner 2024 International Book Impact Award
Winner 2024 BestThriller Book Award
Finalist -- Best Books Award
Serial Podcast -- The Genome Killer (Spotify, Apple)
+1 973 868 6100
www. ElizabethReedAden.com
Books with Eunice Mays Boyd (godmother)
Vintage Mysteries: Dune House, Slay Bells, A Vacation to Kill For
Alaska Vintage Mysteries: Murder Breaks Trail, Doom in the Midnight Sun

Late Correspondence

From: Barbara Hadenfeldt <babshad@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 4:45 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Proposed Upzoning on Existing Commercial Corridors

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

For meeting of the Planning Commission, March 4, 2026:

With our Mayor and City Council firmly in the grip of a handful of developers, I was heartened to hear some dissenting voices/concerns at the last Planning Commission meeting on February 4. I hope the Ad Hoc committee (Merker, Twu, Owens, and Kahn) have met and have come up with some new perspectives to counter the destruction of our most viable and successful commercial corridors, Solano Ave and the Elmwood.

The Council seems determined to give the developers everything they desire and have abnegated their responsibility to carve out some reasonable conditions that will benefit the small businesses along these corridors and the Berkeley populace that enjoys these charming havens for neighborhood shops. Why do we need new zoning laws? We have plenty of market-rate housing and plenty of less popular commercial areas where adding multi-story residential buildings might be a boon, not a detriment. We need more AFFORDABLE housing, which these changes make even less attractive to developers. Clearly the developers are after the most sought-after real estate, with the clearest path to wealth and power.

I hear that the damage is already being done: property owners along Solano and College Aves are putting existing retailers on month-to-month leases, anticipating the new permissive zoning and consequent increases in property values and potential for conglomerate commercial spaces.

One has only to look at downtown Berkeley to see the fruits of development with no guidelines or guardrails. We are left with a hollowed-out core with no public space or civic amenities, a mass of soulless apartment buildings with isolated retail pockets at street level.

I urge the Planning Commission to convince the Council to reconsider these drastic re-zoning plans.

Barbara Hadenfeldt
Long-time Berkeley resident

Late Correspondence

From: Diana Blackwell <diana@odorofpears.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 3:18 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: please stop the high rises

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

The movement toward density will destroy the charming districts where we can shop and eat out at one of a kind businesses run by local people. this will not be an improvement.

when we moved to the Bay Area in 2000, we chose Berkeley for our home because it was unique. In recent years that has been less and less true. very sad.

Also, i hate the bollards and bike lanes and shrinkage of vehicular traffic down to one lane.

Sent from my iPhone

Late Correspondence

From: Sara Wolf <saw@eviltron.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 8:34 AM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: PLEASE do not rezone the commercial districts

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

As a Berkeley resident of 25 years I am dismayed at the lack of forethought going into Berkeley's city planning. You are NOT growing a more affordable, livable, desirable city that supports small business. What is a city without the draw of cafes, shops, small business services- all bringing individuals out of their home to enjoy their community. When you make a decision to destroy our commercial districts you destroy the heart of a city. Please reconsider the plan to rezone the corridors and save the little bit of what makes Berkeley desirable to residents and visitors alike.

With concern,
Sara Wolf

Late Correspondence

From: Steve Robey <steve.robey@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 2:14 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: I do not support the proposed commercial zoning changes

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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 Berkeley Planning Commission,

I believe that we do not need to rezone the corridors. A 100% density bonus project on North Shattuck, where Poulet used to be, was just okayed, showing that it is already possible to develop to the 7-8 story sweet spot under current zoning and get some low-income housing included at the same time. What is the point of allowing developers to build more than existing zoning allows without having to include anything affordable?

This plan isn't necessary; it will result in less affordable housing being built now, when we need it, and will ruin the great small businesses that serve our neighborhoods.

Thank You,

Steve Robey
548 Wildcat Canyon Road
Berkeley CA 94708

Late Correspondence

From: Eva Herzer <evaerzer@icloud.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 8:01 AM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Limit highrises

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

Please do not approve the high rise proposal on your agenda fig 3/4. It will likely limit neighborhood businesses and not contribute to affordable housing. Plus these high buildings are destroying the character of our beloved city.

Sincerely,
Eva Herzer JD

Sent from my iPhone

Late Correspondence

From: Sheila Goldmacher <sheinaleah@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 12:23 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Appalled at prospective plans

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

Just got back from a circle of downtown Berkeley. What a mess, hardly any walking folks around and here it is a beautiful day and so many empty vacant stores and buildings. Getting to look like a ghost town. THE LAST THING WE NEED ARE MORE TALL BUILDINGS ANYWHERE! Your poor judgements in the past have denuded our once charming city of all that made it popular to us and to others around Berkeley. Shame on you for even considering the latest disastrous plans! NO, NO and NO!

SHEILA GOLDMACHER
2341 Parker St. #8
Berkeley, 94704

Late Correspondence

From: Bruce Feingold <drbrucefeingold@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 12:16 PM
To: Planning Commission; Bruce Feingold
Subject: The Corridors Meeting tonight

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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 Planning Commission,

I am writing regarding the meeting tonight and writing to oppose the zoning of the corridors for many reasons, including:

The rezoning will lead to less affordable housing being built in the corridors

Will hurt local businesses as owners will sit on retail properties and sell to the highest bidder, which will make businesses less stable and unable to plan. These are small businesses owned by many local Berkeley residents , many businesses of LGBTQ and owners of color.

Rents in Shattuck Avenue have increased dramatically with the building of high-rise dense housing. Go compare rents, and you will see the Elmwood, for example, is much less expensive than the new studios and one-bedroom units just being built.

The high-rise high-density buildings have a small number of affordable units, studios, and one-bedroom units with very few two-bedroom or three-bedroom units. In other words, because it is more profitable for developers to build more units, these projects are doing nothing to help young families.

These developments are oriented towards renters and will hurt rather than help young families buy condos or townhomes.

A 100% density bonus project on North Shattuck, where Poulet used to be, was approved , showing that it is already possible to develop to the 7-8 story sweet spot under current zoning and get some low-income housing included at the same time. What is the point of allowing developers to build more than existing zoning allows?

These ordinances are anti-union and anti-worker safety as we just saw how developers are skirting the intent to provide good wages and health care protection. How does this fit with Berkeley's attempt to encourage health, safety of working people , and fair wages?

Here's what I do wish the council and commission would work on:

Listen to the public in the San Pablo Planning and the Corridor Planning and work with the neighborhoods and businesses to increase trust, cooperation, and livable housing.

Look for ways to increase two- and three-bedroom family-friendly rental units.

Look for ways to encourage development of condos, townhomes, and small starter homes vs. the rampant high-density building of studios and one-bedroom units.

Look for ways to improve public spaces and green spaces (which was highlighted in the San Pablo and Corridor study).

Encourage the council to have town halls for the neighborhood to build a collaborative effort.

Sincerely,

Bruce H. Feingold
Berkeley, CA

--

Bruce H. Feingold, Ph.D.
PSY7464
2930 Domingo Avenue, #204
Berkeley, CA 94705
(925) 945-1315
BHFein@aol.com

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Late Correspondence

From: alexhermandvm@gmail.com
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 11:22 AM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Upzoning, please vote no

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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 Planning Commission,

Please do not vote to dismantle the very successful North Shattuck, Solano and Elmwood business districts. We need more workforce housing, and this proposal not only will destroy existing successful businesses and disfigure historic districts, but will not help our teachers, firefighters, veterinarians and so many more find a place to live. It lands as a purely profit motivated move for many of us that call Berkeley our beloved hometown.

Thanks,

Alex

Alex Herman, DVM
2909 Ellis St

Late Correspondence

From: Victor Ichioka <v.ichioka@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 10:57 AM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: proposed rezoning of Solano, Elmwood, and North Berkeley

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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 Zoners,

We do NOT need or want more high-rise, high-cost residential buildings. We DO need low-rise, low-cost residential buildings. We do NOT need small businesses destroyed. Please vote against the proposals by developers who want to build multistory (up to 18-story) skyscrapers that would turn our cityscape into ugly, shadow-casting, super expensive, ultra urban environment. People who bought in Berkeley were choosing a diverse, charming, small-scale city that embodies a human scale. Please keep it that way. Choosing the developers' zoning proposal does a huge disservice to Berkeley's residents

Resident since 1947,

Victor Ichioka

Late Correspondence

From: Joan Garvin <joangarvin12@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 10:40 AM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Upzoning plans in Berkeley

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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 Planning Commission,

I am not impressed by the upzoning results in downtown Berkeley. Also the current upzoning reforms planned for College Avenue, Solano Avenue, San Pablo Avenue and north Shattuck are not necessary.

Please do not demolish established stores and restaurants and thereby ruin this community.

Sincerely,
Joan Garvin
Berkeley resident

Late Correspondence

From: Kayla Feder <kaylasensei@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 9:24 AM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Save the Elmwood

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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Kayla Feder



Kayla Feder
Chief Instructor / Owner
Aikido of Berkeley
www.aikidoofberkeley.com

“Always Remember:

*Joy is not merely incidental
to your spiritual quest.
It is vital.”*

~Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

Late Correspondence

From: debsnz Thompson <debsnz@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 9:09 AM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Remove Elmwood from your high rise list

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

Just lived in area for 30 years, I rent in an apt first floor and live my neighbors and area. I have sun and view of Berkeley hills. If u walk down town Berkeley it's cold and dark and windy due to the tall buildings and blockage of sun. We all don't have to be the same.

Have some sense

Deborah Thompson

Sent from my iPhone

Late Correspondence

From: TeaMouse <CarrieGuerriero@pm.me>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 8:53 AM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Upzoning

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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 Planning Commission,

I only support upzoning in Berkeley in the immediate area around the UC Berkeley campus and BART stations.

Sincerely,

Carrie Guerriero

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

Late Correspondence

From: Jodi Brown <jodihbrn@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 7:35 AM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: do not rezone the corridors

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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 Members of the Berkeley Planning Commission,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to rezone the corridors, especially in Elmwood. This is simply not necessary and building high rises will completely destroy the small businesses that serve our neighborhood of Elmwood!! There is no doubt in my mind that small businesses will be demolished and never return. Rezoning will not bring down the high cost of housing.

Please have a heart - do not allow developers to build all-residential high rises and force Berkeley's small businesses and residents out of Berkeley. These small businesses in Elmwood especially provide wonderful ambience, beauty and a tax base for Berkeley.

Thank you for your consideration,
Jodi Carter, Berkeley resident

Late Correspondence

From: Maryann Wolfe <maryann.wolfe@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 7:02 AM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Zoning

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

Please save our small businesses. Don't destroy our small towns.

Sent from my iPhone

Late Correspondence

From: Dawn Thomas <jodydawn@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 10:39 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Please REMOVE THE ELMWOOD from the Upzoning Discussion

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

The Elmwood is a much beloved historic district that reflects the best that Berkeley has to offer - small businesses, unique in their offerings, providing a place for people to congregate and celebrate life. It's a treasure for the entire city, not just the immediate neighbors. Business districts like this are exactly why people want to live in Berkeley. Why would we ever consider destroying it? The city's own consultants have acknowledged that there's no way that we can build apartment buildings there and expect developers will take the steps necessary to retain a thriving business district.

Beyond that — it is also a narrow, 2 lane street - and one of the most congested intersections in the city. Anyone who drives down Ashby or College at 5pm on a weekday would know that it's insanity to introduce a flood of additional cars and humans. When we consider the broad availability of plots/neighborhoods in the city that would actually benefit from new development — this effort just makes no sense. Why these two blocks? Why not Claremont or Telegraph? The lack of wisdom in this choice feels not only imprudent — honestly, it feels suspect.

We should all be fighting to preserve the “amenities” which the City Council has argued need to be made accessible to all. Please, please, please — help us in this effort.

Best Regards,
Dawn Thomas

Late Correspondence

From: Susan Levine <susan.levine@me.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 9:23 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: New construction on Solano Avenue

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

I have lived in Albany and north Berkeley for 55 years. Among the joys of my life has been using driving or walking on Solano Ave. it was a sad day when the Oaks theater closed, but most of the wonderful shops have stayed the same. Please please do not change the city's rule about development on Solano Ave. we need to continue the community for my children and grandchildren who have returned to Berkeley after years living in DC. They miss the ice cream shops they-frequented as kids, but we still have Zacherey's and Pegasus Thousand Oaks Jewellery Kirin etc. Don't ruin our city.

Susan Levine
Sent from my iPad

Late Correspondence

From: Sue Johnson <susana3j@sonic.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 9:14 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: ruining our neighborhoods and communities

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

I am hearing there are plans to build high rises in all the neighborhoods that make Berkeley so unique and attractive. I am extremely opposed to the buildings that are planned and threaten our smaller shops. Berkeley is growing way too fast. We need to first assimilate the people that will be moving in to the new properties that are already being built. We cannot ruin the charming community areas that we have come to adore.

PLEASE STOP!!

Susan Johnson
Berkeley Resident

Late Correspondence

From: Janet King <janking@pacbell.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 8:17 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Zoning changes, particularly Solano Ave.

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

Commissioners,

More housing/apartments are definitely needed in north Berkeley, but access to shopping for food, shoes, basic needs is important for apartment dwellers. More housing on lower Solano, close to San Pablo and the freeway makes sense for access to the freeway for commuting to employment. Upper Solano where there are grocery stores, places to bank, have prescriptions filled, clothing needs addressed, or a coffee shop or casual restaurant would add to the allure of the housing on lower Solano.

I strongly suggest you consider these needs.

Janet King
850 Santa Barbara Rd.

Late Correspondence

From: Stephanie Oxley <stephoxley@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 7:18 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Regarding rezoning in historic shopping districts

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

Please vote against rezoning historic shopping districts in Berkeley that would involve building removal, especially well-built and historic buildings reflecting community character for the construction of high-rise apartment buildings. Please consider a rezoning law that can be tailored to apply only to empty lots or those lots that individual, regional community vote approves. Reasons for my comment:

1. There are blighted areas that would benefit from new constructions, but removal of functional buildings in historic shopping districts is destructive, hurting small shopkeepers, historic value and legacy, and the community.
2. A blighted area can be rebuilt into a new shopping district that reflects a modern character instead of destroying historic shopping districts.
3. Removal of historic, well-built buildings, and those reflecting community character once removed are removed forever - historic value, character, and legacy are lost.
4. Some landowners will undoubtedly want to take financial advantage of opportunities from developers that would result in the destruction of iconic buildings the community and shopkeepers want to protect, discussed in number 3 above.
5. Further, some of these developers and landowners may disingenuously assert the need for affordable housing as a rationale for the new construction, when the evidence suggests most new private construction is not affordable housing.
6. Pragmatically, it's a land grab that will enable some to profit at the expense of the community, historic value and legacy, and small shopkeepers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Stephanie Oxley

Late Correspondence

From: Elea Bernou <drbernou@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 5:43 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: please do not do this!

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

Whoever is going to listen to this.

If you tear down the wonderful small shops, restaurants, etcetera, Berkeley will no longer be Berkeley. Too many huge buildings are already taking away the Berkeley that I've always loved.

Please do not take away Elmwood, Solano, and all the beautiful places in Berkeley.

Please,
Elea

--

Dr Elea Bernou, Clinical Neuropsychologist
2718 Webster St, Berkeley, CA 94705
Cell: 925-457-4214

Late Correspondence

From: Connie Field <connie@clarityfilms.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 4:48 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Planning high rises

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

I totally object to your plans for high rises that will destroy our communities common areas on Solano and CollegeAve
You seem to be in bed with the developers and care very little about the quality of life of Berkeley residents!

Sent from my iPhone

Connie Field

1029 Keeler Ave

Late Correspondence

From: J Strömberg <janet.stromberg@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 4:39 PM
To: Blackaby, Brent
Cc: Berkeley Mayor's Office; Kesarwani, Rashi; Taplin, Terry; Bartlett, Ben; Tregub, Igor; O'Keefe, Shoshana; lunaparra@berkeleyca.gov; Humbert, Mark; All Council; Planning Commission
Subject: Re: High-rises in all commercial districts, local businesses gone, no affordable housing.
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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PS

The Corridors presentations omitted any mention of the added housing unit potential of current zoning, including density bonus affordable housing. Having omitted that, there was then no analysis of obstacles to increasing housing units within the current zoning framework, and what sorts of policies and incentives could help.

If it is true that the “sweet spot” for building affordable housing would be using building techniques for up to seven stories, perhaps the staff report should discuss this and include projections of affordable and other housing we can achieve if our commercial corridors are zoned such that the density bonus tops out at 7 stories.

Thank you again for your consideration,

Janet Stromberg

On Tue, Mar 3, 2026 at 10:32 AM J Strömberg <janet.stromberg@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Council Member Blackaby,

You have asked us, your constituents, to tell you what our highest priorities are. This message expresses my highest priority for the City of Berkeley. The reason it's number one, even higher than street and fire safety, is because it is a decision you will make that will likely impact our town for 100 years. It is extremely clear that the beneficiaries of the proposed building code changes are the developers who have damaged our downtown. This is not a resident-friendly (your voters!) change. It will not help us bring a mix of new residents across the economic spectrum, and it will degrade the opportunity for local businesses to establish, remain and thrive.

Please don't undermine your own legacy.

What's true for your legacy is also true for Mayor Ishii and Council Members Kesarwani, Taplin, Barlett, Tregub, O'Keefe, Lunaparra and Humbert, cc'd herein along with the Planning Commission.

Please read and consider.

Thank you,

Janet Stromberg

cc: Berkeley Mayor, City Council Members and Planning Commission

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Build a Better Berkeley** <info@buildabetterberkeley.org>

Date: Mon, Mar 2, 2026 at 10:38 PM

Subject: High-rises in all commercial districts, local businesses gone, no affordable housing.

To: <janet.stromberg@gmail.com>



On March 4, the [Planning Commission will be meeting](#) to discuss the commercial rezoning plan

Hello Janet,

The City Council is again proposing an alarming major change to our zoning laws. When we first formed Build a Better Berkeley, it was in response to huge changes regarding what could be built throughout the city residential areas. This time it is an assault on three of our most important and popular commercial zones. Here's what is being suggested:

- **Solano, No. Shattuck, and the Elmwood district of College Avenue will allow high rise residential buildings**, even if it means destroying local businesses that currently serve the community and provide a tax base for the city.
- **Ground floor space will be allowed to be all residential**, forever eliminating small businesses that could serve the neighborhoods and turning our commercial areas into residential ones.
- **Developers won't have to include on-site low-income housing in what the city predicts will be the most commonly built structures – ones that are 7-8 stories high.**

Why This Matters

Berkeley doesn't have a shortage of market rate housing, but it definitely lacks sufficient affordable housing. The proposed change takes away all the incentive for developers to add affordable housing into their projects.

Here's How It Works

State law lets developers build more than what is allowed by current local zoning laws and exceed height limits if, **and only if**, they include a specific amount of low income/affordable housing in their buildings. This is referred to as the **density bonus**, and it was specifically included in the law to increase the amount of low-income housing being developed.

City staff and developers contend that a construction “sweet spot” is in buildings about 7-stories high, where the costs of materials are relatively low. Generally speaking, at over 7-8 stories, materials and construction methods are more expensive. Developers however, are still eager to build more profitable higher buildings, particularly higher than about 18 stories.

But Here's the Rub

Right now, current zoning of 2-3 stories in the three areas under consideration won't allow “sweet spot” construction, **unless** a developer is compelled to trigger the **density bonus** – that is, the requirement to include a certain amount of low-income housing.

However, if the zoning is changed as is being proposed, the city is giving developers what they want — the ability to build high-rises without having to produce a single unit of below market rate housing.

So, What Do We Get Out of this Proposal?

- **NOTHING to make certain our great small businesses on these streets will continue to thrive and generate much needed tax revenues for the city.**
- **NOTHING to help bring down the high cost of housing.**
- **NOTHING that provides affordable housing for baristas, store clerks, service workers, and all the people who make our city vibrant and our lives easier and more pleasant.**
- **NOTHING that adds to the ambience or beauty or interest of the city.**

But we probably will get one thing: **another bond measure on the 2026 ballot asking us to raise our taxes to make up for all the deficiencies of this zoning proposal and all the other unjustifiable actions by the city.**

And here's another thing that *will* probably happen: because of the development potential of the commercial lots, land values will go up and owners will sell out to developers, who will consolidate lots, get entitlements from the city for their projects, and demolish the buildings and all the small businesses along with them. They'll sit on the empty lots until their values increase even more, waiting to sell the building entitlements, which is even more profitable than developing the property. And then, still more of the city will look like downtown.

What can you do?

Tell the planners and councilmembers that we do not need to rezone the corridors. A 100% density bonus project on North Shattuck, where Poulet used to be, was just okayed, showing that it is already possible to develop to the 7-8 story sweet spot under current zoning and get some low-income housing included at the same time. What is the point of allowing developers to build more than existing zoning allows **without having to include anything affordable?**

Tell the Planning Commission this plan is not necessary, will result in less affordable housing being built *now*, when we need it, and will be ruinous for the great small businesses that serve our neighborhoods!

Attend the meeting in person:

Wednesday, March 4, 2026 at 6:30 PM

North Berkeley Senior Center

1901 Hearst Ave.

Attend remotely using Zoom:

<https://cityofberkeley-info.zoomgov.com/j/1617173983>

Send email to the Planning Commission:

planningpc@berkeleyca.gov

Sent via [ActionNetwork.org](https://www.actionnetwork.org). To update your email address, change your name or address, or to stop receiving emails from Build a Better Berkeley, please [click here](#).

Late Correspondence

From: Sue Campbell <supatra7062@cs.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 3:45 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Proposed zoning changes to build high rise apartments

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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 Planning Commission, I am concerned about proposed zoning changes to build high rise apartments

I wrote to all council members about this in late December 2025:

"Dear Mayor and Council Members, I am pleading with you to save our neighborhoods from over-development. It seems tempting to tap into State subsidies for housing, but we need to do that very cautiously. The population boom will not continue forever and we will be left with empty high-rise buildings that have scarred the landscape and eliminated neighborhoods.

I lost my single-family home in the 2008 crash and I have been renting ever since. The high rise apartment blocks built in recent decades in Berkeley have always been too expensive for me (and my 2 kids), and very few of those apartments are for sale. This means that there is no on-ramp to the housing market for low and middle income families. It is all unaffordable.

PLEASE DO NOT ENCOURAGE DEVELOPERS TO BUILD INDISCRIMINATELY IN BERKELEY. This boom is not serving residents at all, and we are losing our historic buildings...

Population predictions in California:

<https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/document/2020/Oct/07354626731.pdf> Without sustained immigration, California's population will decline: "The Hispanic population is projected to grow from 39 percent today to 46 percent by 2060. "

The population of California is increasingly aging : "From 2016 to 2036.. the share of the population age 65 and older is projected to grow from 14 percent to 23 percent. " We should be building more facilities for our elders : "In 2051, California is projected to join the ranks of Japan and many European countries which have more deaths than births"

What we know about the current property market: <https://www.realtor.com/news/trends/first-time-homebuyer-median-age-2025/> The property market is so expensive it's becoming unsustainable and

only serves baby boomers and hedge fund managers: "The median age of first-time buyers rose to 40 years old. The median age for repeat property buyers is 62 years old. ""

Please do more research and plan for the not-so-distant future.

Susan Campbell
Berkeley resident for almost 30 years (94703)

Late Correspondence

From: Bernhard Haux <bernhard.haux@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 2:54 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Opposition to Proposed Zoning Changes – Solano, North Shattuck, and Elmwood/College Ave Corridors

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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 Members of the Planning Commission,

My name is Bernhard Haux, and I am a long-time Berkeley homeowner and the owner of rental property in the city. I am writing to express serious concern about the proposed zoning changes to the Solano Avenue, North Shattuck, and Elmwood/College Avenue commercial corridors, and to urge the Commission not to advance this proposal.

I care deeply about Berkeley's future — both as someone raising a family here and as someone who provides housing to tenants in this community. It is precisely because I hold both of those stakes that I find this proposal so troubling. It fails on nearly every measure that should matter to us: affordable housing production, small business vitality, neighborhood character, and sound fiscal policy.

The Affordable Housing Problem This Proposal Creates

Berkeley's housing challenge is not a shortage of market-rate units. It is a shortage of affordable housing. Under current zoning, developers who wish to build beyond the existing 2–3 story limits in these corridors must invoke the state density bonus — which requires the inclusion of a meaningful percentage of low-income units. This mechanism is working. The recently approved 100% density bonus project on North Shattuck, at the former Poulet site, demonstrates that 7–8 story development is already achievable under existing zoning, and it comes with affordable units attached.

The proposed rezoning to allow 7–8 story buildings by right eliminates this leverage entirely. Developers would be handed what they want — the profitable "sweet spot" of construction — with zero obligation to include a single below-market-rate unit. As a property owner, I understand the economics of development. That is exactly why I can tell you: if you remove the incentive, developers will not voluntarily include affordable housing. Why would they?

The result is predictable. We will build more luxury housing that does nothing to serve the baristas, retail clerks, teachers, and service workers who are the backbone of our neighborhoods. And then, inevitably, we will be asked to approve yet another bond measure to fund the affordable housing that this rezoning failed to produce. As a taxpayer, I find that unacceptable.

The Threat to Our Commercial Districts

Solano, North Shattuck, and the Elmwood are not just commercial zones on a map. They are the living rooms of their neighborhoods — the places where residents shop, eat, gather, and build community.

These small businesses also generate critical tax revenue for the city.

The proposal to allow ground-floor residential use in these corridors is especially alarming. Once a ground-floor space converts from commercial to residential, that conversion is effectively permanent. We would be trading an irreplaceable asset — active, neighborhood-serving retail frontage — for additional apartment units that could be built elsewhere.

Moreover, the development potential created by upzoning will drive up commercial land values, incentivizing property owners to sell to developers. Those developers will consolidate parcels, demolish existing buildings, displace the small businesses operating in them, and in many cases sit on entitled lots waiting for values to climb further before building anything at all. We have seen this pattern play out in other parts of Berkeley and across the Bay Area. The result is not a thriving neighborhood — it is a block of empty lots and construction fencing that can persist for years.

As a rental property owner, I am keenly aware of the pressures on both tenants and small business operators in this city. This proposal exacerbates those pressures rather than relieving them.

What I Am Asking

I respectfully ask the Planning Commission to reject this proposal. Current zoning, combined with the state density bonus framework, already allows for meaningful development in these corridors — development that includes affordable housing. There is no demonstrated need to hand developers the ability to build high-rises without any affordability requirements.

If the city wishes to encourage more housing production in these areas, it should do so in ways that preserve the density bonus as a tool for affordable housing, protect ground-floor commercial space, and include meaningful safeguards against speculative land banking.

I will not be able to attend today's meeting at the North Berkeley Senior Center, but I urge the Commission to listen carefully to the residents and business owners who will be most directly affected by this decision.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Bernhard Haux
Berkeley Home and Rental Property Owner

Late Correspondence

From: Isabelle G <isabelle.gaston@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 2:29 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: I do not support the proposed commercial zoning changes

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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 Berkeley Planning Commission,

I believe that we do not need to rezone the corridors. A 100% density bonus project on North Shattuck, where Poulet used to be, was just okayed, showing that it is already possible to develop to the 7-8 story sweet spot under current zoning and get some low-income housing included at the same time. What is the point of allowing developers to build more than existing zoning allows without having to include anything affordable?

This plan isn't necessary; it will result in less affordable housing being built now, when we need it, and will ruin the great small businesses that serve our neighborhoods.

Thank You,

Isabelle Gaston
548 Wildcat Canyon Road
Berkeley CA 94708

Late Correspondence

From: Sondra Jensen <sjensen@berkeley.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 2:08 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: PLEASE....Listen to Berkeley residents and...

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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....stop the effort to replace our much-needed shopping areas with high-rise apartments.

Haven't the developers already done enough to ruin the look of our once lovely, welcoming small University downtown? Obviously these huge apartments were not needed (in spite of the 9000 figure supplied by the state long ago) since they are still half empty.

Since when are developers in charge of what our wonderful University town is to look like? And they were allowed to change their minds due to lack of money AFTER driving the Center Street stores out of business. Look at Center Street now! It's a total embarrassment and how many lost their jobs?

Now you dare to give more developers more opportunity to do the same in Elmwood, north Shattuck, and Solano Ave.

Where will Berkeley residents and students go to buy their stationery needs, gifts, books, clothes, hardware, lamps, etc? Where can they get their food and meals? Target?!? Walnut Creek??

And just as important, HOW CAN YOU HAVE THE NERVE TO SHUT STORES DOWN AND SEND THEIR OWNERS HOME WITH NO INCOME?

You are facing a rebellion of the people who live here and who love the town of Berkeley, perhaps not as-is, but surely not as proposed in the words of a city council and Mayor who clearly have turned their backs on Berkeley's residents as they sign off on this inhumane proposal.

Thank you for reading,
Sondra Jensen

Late Correspondence

From: a rh <ariella262002@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 1:28 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: High rise building on Solano and College Ave.

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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To whom this concerns,

Please don't do this! Berkeley is so quickly losing the charm it once had. Our smaller shopping streets like the ones mentioned above are still nice places to go and wander. This will destroy them. I used to love Berkeley and feel proud to live here. I no longer feel that way, and this would certainly make things worse.

Ariel Roland-Holst

Late Correspondence

From: Lisa Bruce <lisa@lisabruce.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 12:37 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: NO on rezoning

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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Dear Berkeley Planning Commission,

We do NOT need to rezone our corridors.

Please look closely at the fact that this will Not create affordable housing and it will be disastrous to our independent businesses that Berkeley is so proud to have.

Thank you,
Lisa Bruce
Berkeley Resident

Late Correspondence

From: Anne Boersma <aaannn1@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 12:25 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: No high rises

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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.

Hello, please do not agree to the zoning changes which will allow high-rise apartments on top Solano, in the Elmwood, and on Shattuck. You will destroy our small businesses and the quality of life for the neighbors in that area.

Dr. A. Boersma

 Peace 

Safeco Insurance™

A Liberty Mutual Company

SAFECO INSURANCE COMPANY OF AMERICA
P O BOX 704000, SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84170

ALIVE INSURANCE SERVICES INC
3060 EL CERRITO PLZ STE 302
EL CERRITO CA 94530-4011

AGENT TELEPHONE: (510) 524-3200

JANUARY 31, 2026
**Late Communications
Planning Commission**

MAR 04 2025

**RECEIVED
At Meeting**

MICHAEL APTE
URSULA SCHULZ
1442A WALNUT ST # 444
BERKELEY CA 94709-1405

Re: Notice of Nonrenewal — Landlord Protection Policy 0A4616542

Dear MICHAEL APTE ,

We are sorry to inform you that your above-referenced Landlord Protection insurance policy is non-renewed, effective 12:01 a.m. standard time on May 1, 2026.

The reason for non-renewal is:

This dwelling does not meet our underwriting guidelines for coverage. Specifically, Safeco does not offer coverage for the following reason(s): Your property is located in a region that is considered too densely concentrated.

If you have any further questions, you may contact our Customer Service Department at: 1-800-332-3226. If you remain unsatisfied after speaking with our Customer Service Department, you may have the matter reviewed by the California Department of Insurance. The unit in the Department of Insurance that responds to consumer inquiries and complaints can be reached over the phone at 1-800-927-HELP (4357), through their website at www.insurance.ca.gov, or through the mail with a letter addressed to the Consumer Services Division, 300 South Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90013.

Sincerely,

SAFECO INSURANCE COMPANY OF AMERICA
Personal Lines Underwriting

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Please see reverse side for information we are required to provide you.

February 17, 2026

Via Broker Transmission

Safeco Insurance Company of America

Personal Lines Underwriting

Re: Formal Objection and Request for Reconsideration – Policy No. OA4616542

Property: 1628 Walnut Street, Berkeley, CA

Named Insureds: Michael Apte and Ursula Schulz

Dear Underwriting Department:

I write to formally object to Safeco's Notice of Nonrenewal dated January 31, 2026, advising that the above-referenced Landlord Protection Policy will not be renewed effective May 1, 2026, on the stated basis that the property is located in a region considered "too densely concentrated."

I have maintained continuous coverage with Safeco for this property since 2019. During that period, no claims have been submitted under this policy. There has been no material change in the property's condition, occupancy, construction, maintenance, or risk characteristics since prior renewals. To my knowledge, there is no property-specific underwriting deficiency that would warrant nonrenewal.

The explanation provided appears to reference a regional or aggregation-based classification rather than any condition specific to the insured risk. Accordingly, I respectfully request written clarification of the following:

1. The specific underwriting guideline relied upon in issuing this nonrenewal.
2. The definition of "region" as applied to this determination, including the geographic boundaries utilized.
3. Whether this decision reflects a property-specific underwriting assessment or a broader portfolio concentration, aggregation, or exposure management determination.
4. The California Department of Insurance filing reference number under which this underwriting classification has been approved.
5. Confirmation that this nonrenewal complies with California Insurance Code §§ 675.1 (nonrenewal standards), 790.03 (unfair discrimination), and 1861.03 (file-and-approve requirements under Proposition 103).

If this determination reflects an aggregation or portfolio concentration model rather than any adverse characteristic of the insured property, I respectfully request reconsideration in light of the property's individual underwriting profile and clean loss history.

If there are any specific underwriting concerns relating to the property itself that could be addressed through corrective action, endorsement modification, or additional underwriting review, I request that Safeco identify them so that I may evaluate whether remediation is possible.

I respectfully request written clarification and reconsideration of this decision.

Nothing in this correspondence shall be construed as a waiver of any rights available under California law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael Apte', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Michael Apte

Berkeley, California

Safeco Response

Jazmin Love <jazmin.love@libertymutual.com>
To: "mgapte@gmail.com" <mgapte@gmail.com>

Fri, Feb 27, 2026 at 6:34 AM



Re: Your Recent Inquiry
Named Insured: MICHAEL APTE URSULA SCHULZ
Policy Number: OA4616542
Underwriting Company: Safeco Insurance Company of America

Dear Michael Apte,

This letter is written in response to the correspondence received by our Presidential Service Team regarding the above-referenced file. I appreciate the opportunity to address your concerns.

Based on your statement, you have concerns regarding the non-renewal of the policy referenced above.

The Results of Our Review:

We show that this Landlord Protection policy was initiated on May 1, 2019, and has renewed annually. Most recently, the policy was renewed on May 1, 2025. This confirms that the policy is scheduled to be non-renewed effective May 1, 2026. We non-renewed this policy as the risk no longer meets our underwriting guidelines. We cannot reverse this decision. The property insured under this policy is in a region where the dwellings are too densely concentrated for us to provide coverage.

We respectfully maintain that the non-renewal of this landlord policy was appropriate because the dwelling does not meet Safeco Insurance of America Underwriting Guidelines, which are proprietary and confidential and have been filed with the State of California Department of Insurance.

You may be eligible for insurance through another carrier, which can be located through the California Home Insurance Finder at homeinsurancefinder.insurance.ca.gov or through the California Fair Plan Association at www.cfpnet.com (1-800-339-4099).

I hope this information provides clarity regarding our decision. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please feel free to contact me directly.

Respectfully,

Jazmin' Love
Licensed in multiple states, including CA #0190705
Consumer Affairs Specialist II
Presidential Service Team
Direct Dial: (617)-654-3029

ref:I00D4102GQ6k.I500UU0dPhhg:ref

Late Communications
Planning Commission

March 4, 2026

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I am a long-time resident of Berkeley, a retired social scientist, my doctorate is in public health at UC Berkeley. I worked as a researcher for the State health department, Stanford and UC Davis in survey and environmental studies for many years. My publications are online at ResearchGate.net. <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Margaret-McIntyre-Research>

MAR 04 2025
RECEIVED
At Meeting

At the City Council meeting on November 6th, 2025 I was appalled at the planning department survey presented to the City Council. The questions were poorly constructed and had 1200 respondents who were not described. We could not tell if they were residents of Berkeley, if they were realtors, or anything about them. The planning department presented the results of the survey to the City Council as if it had a great value. As I said at the meeting, the survey should be *ignored*.

Furthermore, in the Corridor Report presented to the Council, the **Summary of Key Findings** on page 5 provides **NO data**. According to the report, they talked to “Five local real estate brokers/investors/developers, City of Berkeley Office of Economic Development, Save Berkeley Shops Community Organization” period.

We have no way of knowing if this list is of findings or opinions. If truly findings, they should be based on data. But the **Summary of Key Findings** provides no data, so we assume it is based on the opinions of real estate brokers and an office in the city of Berkeley. The City Council is to make policy based on opinions?

Summary of Key Findings or opinions?

- There are fewer small businesses operating in Berkeley today than there were ten years ago. *Why? Because of the closing of small downtown businesses? Or?*
- Rezoning is unlikely to drive a spike in rents along the three corridors. *How do we know? No data.*
- Any redevelopment along the corridors will be gradual and limited, *not like downtown?*
- National retail trends, increasing operating costs, and changing consumer preferences are creating challenges that pose bigger threats to small businesses than the corridor rezoning. *Berkeley Data?*
- Small businesses are likely to benefit from having more people living in the surrounding area, *if they continue to exist after construction and rezoning.*
- The corridor neighborhoods have increasing shares of higher income households, which can be a positive change for small businesses, *if they still exist.*

The report on the cost of developing Berkeley's commercial corridors was also very limited. Not enough information was given about **current** corridor businesses, or the impact of up zoning on existing businesses.

If I were examining commercial corridor development in a manner similar to what I did in my past work, I would first describe the current corridor and then examine how development would affect it and the city. Below are some ideas; data could be provided by city staff.

Current Commercial Corridor Activity

The commercial areas considered for up zoning and increased construction are Solano Avenue, North Shattuck and the Elmwood. All are currently vital commercial areas. Solano Avenue in 2025 paid \$ in sales taxes, \$ in parking funds, and \$ in other income to the city of Berkeley. Below is a table of Berkeley's commercial corridor's substantial financial contributions to the city:

2025 Berkeley Corridor Income				
	Solano Ave	North Shattuck	Elmwood	Total
# Business licenses.	N	N	N	NN
Sales Tax	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Parking Fees	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Property Tax	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Developer Fees	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Other Income	\$	\$	\$	\$\$
Totals	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$

The Cost of Development

The possible cost of up zoning the commercial corridors can be seen by examining Berkeley's downtown development. The city has reduced income from downtown development and has many vacant stores.

Berkeley Downtown Development Income					
	2010	2015	2020	2025	total
# Bus. Licenses	N	N	N	N	N
Sales Tax	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Parking Fees	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Property Taxes	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Developer Fees.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Other Income.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Total Income	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

Data indicate that the city's revenues have changed with the downtown development. Revenues have (increased) (decreased) showing that development must be carefully planned to continue funding the city budget and maintain Berkeley's commercial vitality. The development of the Corridors could possibly decrease Berkeley's income.

Vacancy rates in downtown Berkeley can also show the commercial and residential impact of development. Currently, the commercial vacancy rate in new downtown buildings is X, and although apartments are better, they stand at y. High rents in new buildings may explain high vacancy rates. Many owners of these new buildings are corporations. **Landlords may keep units vacant rather than lower rents to avoid reducing the building's valuation for refinancing or sale. Vacancies reduce tax income to the city.**

Furthermore, financial conditions change. There are many (17?) stalled projects in the downtown area. We only can look at abandoned Center Street to see the impact of demolition and no construction. Is there any guarantee that this would not occur in the corridors? According to the

Summary of Findings, "Any redevelopment along the corridors will be gradual and limited." However no data are supplied.

Corridor Development: Potential impact on Small Business

Many small business owners in Corridor areas have told the City Council that they are concerned that they will suffer lost revenue during construction, and if their building is demolished, they will not be able to rent at a comparable rate. They commented that they had not been contacted by the city.

The Corridor Report does not provide data on commercial rents. Data helpful to both city planning and business owners are **actual** rents these businesses are paying for their current sites, and **actual** rents charged in newer Berkeley buildings.

Commercial Rents in Berkeley

Size of business _____	< sq ft _____	> sq ft _____
Average Rents in Buildings built since 2010:	\$ _____	\$ _____
Average Rents in Building <2010: _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

From this data, one can see that Corridor business owners have (nothing to fear.) or (have real concerns. These must be addressed by the city, as city revenue will be lost and the vitality of the corridor commercial districts will be lost.) The commercial vitality and city income from corridor districts can be profoundly affected by unrestricted development.

Proposed Housing for Corridor Development

A justification for corridor development is the need for more housing in Berkeley. Currently, there are X number of housing units in the three corridors. Of these, Y are under rent control. If up zoned, it is possible that as many as X additional housing units could be constructed and many rent controlled buildings demolished. Under current law, no new buildings would be under rent control.

Development of housing could affect housing available to current residents. In 2025, the median rent for older buildings was \$X . To compare, we can examine the housing already constructed in the areas of Berkeley where permitted.

X number of housing units were built in Berkeley since 2010; the 2026 median rent for one bedroom apartments is \$X , which is (higher) (lower) than for buildings built prior to 2010. So, what will be the rent for one bedroom apartments in newly constructed buildings? Will these newer buildings meet the needs of Berkeley renters? How many current residents would be displaced?

Housing for Workers

Building affordable housing is considered desirable for addressing the rental needs of workers by both state and local governments. However, in Alameda County even affordable housing rents are high because affordable housing is based on the Area Median Income. In Alameda County, the Area Media income is \$159,000; affordable housing is for people making \$100,000 a year;

low income housing is 80% or \$80,000, and very low income housing, 50% or \$50,000 a year for single persons.

According to figures from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, average salaries of Alameda County workers show that few can afford “affordable” rents. Management, legal, engineering salaries are more than \$100k a year; education and construction, \$68,000; sales and transportation, about \$40,000. (<https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/06001>) This shows that most workers are Low Income, Very Low Income or Extremely Low Income under affordable housing guide lines. Very few new buildings supply housing for these workers.

According to data from ABAG, Berkeley currently has built 126% of its RHNA housing at market rate and only 16% for low income residents. Housing for workers is lacking.

Housing for Elders

At the February 10th meeting of the Berkeley City Council, the housing developer for 2109 Virginia Street Patrick Kennedy stated “This project is targeting older residents who are interested in downsizing, empty nesters who are interested in downsizing. All of these people have no place to go if they want to stay in Berkeley and they sell their Berkeley house... it will allow legacy Berkeley’s to stay in Berkeley instead of moving to Walnut Creek, ” He is assuming that his apartments will be attractive to older residents who wish to downsize, however, he presented no data to substantiate this statement.

Berkeley elders have constraints on downsizing. It is likely that their houses are paid for, are taxed under Prop 13, and that their income is fixed. Moving to a Berkeley apartment would mean higher taxes and high payments. If they consider the house to be their family’s inheritance, they are not likely to sell.

Home sales in these zip codes 94707 and 94708 numbered 283 in 2024 and 266 in 2025. Information is not available as to the age of the sellers or where they located after sale.

Mr. Kennedy also stated that selling these homes would provide more opportunity for young families to move to Berkeley. Under current conditions, these young families will buy homes of over one million dollars with taxes of about \$15,000 a year. It would be interesting to have data to see if this is occurring.

Furthermore, according to Kennedy, providing apartments for downsizing elders will “liberate a lot of Prop 13 houses and ... generate a huge amount of taxable Berkeley property, around 100 million dollars to the City of Berkeley,” Again, Mr. Kennedy made assumptions about where Berkeley elders will locate that he did not substantiate with data.

To provide more information to the city for better planning and to find out if Mr. Kennedy’s assumptions are true, the city could survey home sellers for the last 3 years and ask why they sold and where they relocated.

Or, the city could take a carefully sampled survey of 7,629 home owners in zip codes 94707 and 94708 to find out the homeowners’ plans. According to the 2020 US Census, over 85% of the

homes in zip codes 94707 and 94709 were owner occupied, numbering 7,629 homes. More than half of the population in 2020 were over age 60.

Are the older homeowners planning to downsize? If so, where do they plan to live? In Berkeley, or elsewhere? In assisted living? Are they planning to leave their homes to their families? Will their families inherit their Prop 13 taxes? Data will provide information to the city as to the success of building apartments for elders.

Effects of high rent developments

The impact of creating more apartments with high rents needs to be examined. For example, do high rents mean that many apartments are shared? How many apartments are shared by co-tenants? Is there data on the average number of people sharing one apartment? What is the vacancy rate of the high rent apartments? Where do working families find housing? Do high rents increase long commutes to work? How do high rents impact Berkeley demographics, age, income levels? Obtaining information on the housing built in the last ten years could provide data on our current housing needs.

There are many studies showing that increased homelessness is due to high rents. (Univ. of SF). Yes, Berkeley needs more housing, but housing that meets the needs of its residents.

Buildings possible in the Corridor Areas

The Corridor Report provides data on the types of buildings that could be built and the laws governing density bonuses and other information. Given the lack of data and even misinformation in other parts of the Corridor Report, one may wish to verify these sections.

It is my hope that city departments can supply the figures missing here. It would give the City Council much more information about development to guide its policies.

Very truly yours,

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