

**Jacob, Melinda**

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**From:** Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB)  
**Subject:** FW: Root and Bloom Institute  
**Attachments:** Berkeley.pdf

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**From:** Jeff Gianelli <jgia1228@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 8, 2026 11:40 AM  
**To:** Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB) <Planningzab@berkeleyca.gov>  
**Cc:** Rachel Berry <rachel@rootandbloominstitute.org>  
**Subject:** Root and Bloom Institute

**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 ZAB:

Please find my attached letter regarding parking at Root and Bloom Institute.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Gianelli



**Jeffrey Gianelli, LCSW 88604 Onward Leading Therapy/ Rose Therapy**  
IFS, EMDR, Ketamine Assisted Therapy & EMDR Consulting  
[jgia1228@gmail.com](mailto:jgia1228@gmail.com)  
(510) 543-0323  
[www.onwardleading.com](http://www.onwardleading.com)

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**Jacob, Melinda**

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**From:** Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB)  
**Subject:** FW: Support for 830 Bancroft Way extended hours  
**Attachments:** Root & Bloom support.pdf

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**From:** Rolf Bell <rolf.bell12@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 8, 2026 10:52 AM  
**To:** Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB) <Planningzab@berkeleyca.gov>  
**Subject:** Support for 830 Bancroft Way extended hours

**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 Board staff,  
Please distribute the attached letter of support today with Board members so they are informed prior to Thursday's meeting. Thanks in advance!

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Regards,  
Rolf Bell, Co - owner  
[Workstation West Berkeley](#)

**Zoning Adjustments Board**  
City of Berkeley Planning Department  
1947 Center Street  
Berkeley, CA 94704

April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**RE: Root & Bloom: 830 Bancroft Way**

Dear ZAB Board Members,

In 2019 we were able to complete the transformation of a tired old Warehouse (originally opened in the 1920s as a Shoe Factory) as a Co-Working Space known [Workstation West Berkeley](#). Members of the Zoning staff recognized that 20<sup>th</sup> Century 9-5 operations was not a viable model for us as small businesses and entrepreneurs need to be in conversation with clients in Europe, Asia & the East Coast when they are open for business as well. We requested 7am to 11pm business hours Zoning staff approved. This has been key for us to support Berkeley's small vibrant business community. Our 'Legal Non Conforming' Zoning status has been honored as a place to conduct business and light industry since it was established well before R-1A zoning designation existed ( a *designation leading to our housing crisis*).

During the course of the past few years when the [Rudramandir Meditation Center](#) could not survive the curse of COVID, this Dynamic Center was a hollow shell falling into extreme disrepair.

We are writing this letter because of the impressive transformation of this space along with the professional and thoughtful [Root & Bloom](#) staff we have come to know during this building's renovation. Not only the investment of time and treasure is apparent, but Berkeley will benefit for decades to come from their dynamic integrative approach to counseling and healing. We look forward to having them as community colleagues!

We **strongly support** their request for more reasonable operational hours as many clients have needs before & after work sessions along with others who may be coming from half way across the country for intensive multi day sessions that are designed to facilitate their tight schedules.

Our Community needs this Center and its vision for healing. It would be a strategic mistake to restrict their path forward.

We appreciate your thoughtfulness with ensuring their success.

Respectfully submitted,

Rolf Bell

[Workstation West Berkeley](#)

2247 Sixth Street / 833 Bancroft Way Berkeley CA 94710

## Zoning Adjustments Board

City of Berkeley Planning Department  
1947 Center Street  
Berkeley, CA 94704

April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026

### RE: [Root & Bloom: 830 Bancroft Way](#)

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Respectfully submitted,

Rolf Bell

[Workstation West Berkeley](#)

2247 Sixth Street / 833 Bancroft Way Berkeley CA 94710



West Berkeley Neighbors  
Berkeley, CA 94710

April 9, 2026

Zoning Adjustments Board, City of Berkeley Planning Department  
1947 Center Street  
Berkeley, CA 94704

Received  
APR 07 2026  
Land Use Planning

**Subject: Objection to Expanded Hours of Operation – Root and Bloom Institute (830 Bancroft Way, LMDR Zone)**

Dear Planning Staff and Members of the Zoning Adjustments Board,

We are writing to formally object to the proposed expansion of operating hours for the Root and Bloom Institute (RBI) facility located at 830 Bancroft Way designated in the Project Application as located in a Low Medium Density Residential (LMDR) designated neighborhood.

We wish to reiterate that neighbors are not opposing the existence of the use itself. Many residents support the rehabilitation of the building and appreciate efforts to provide wellness-oriented services. However, the proposed expansion to approximately 76 hours of weekly operation—including evenings and weekends—represents an operational intensity incompatible with the residential character and infrastructure constraints of this LMDR neighborhood.

Since the applicant's March 25 2026 resubmittal introduced a Parking Minimization Plan, we have reviewed the updated materials carefully. While we acknowledge the applicant's effort to respond to community concerns, the revised proposal does not adequately mitigate foreseeable impacts.

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## 1. Inconsistency with LMDR General Plan Designation

The Berkeley General Plan Land Use Element defines Low Medium Density Residential areas as neighborhoods characterized primarily by housing, where uses appropriate to Low Density Residential areas remain appropriate.

An operational schedule extending across evenings and weekends transforms the project into a continuously active institutional use rather than a neighborhood-scale service. The proposed hours significantly exceed what is typically compatible with residential zoning intent.

Under Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Chapters 23.202, 23.306, and 23.308, discretionary approval must ensure neighborhood compatibility and protection of public welfare. Conditions on hours and days of operation are therefore not only permissible but necessary.

## 2. Evaluation of the Applicant's Parking Minimization Plan

We acknowledge that RBI has prepared a detailed Parking Minimization Plan outlining transportation incentives, car-free encouragement, and internal policies directed at staff, tenants, and visitors.

However, the effectiveness of this plan relies almost entirely on voluntary behavioral compliance rather than enforceable physical mitigation.

Key concerns include:

### **Reliance on Behavioral Assumptions**

The plan assumes visitors will choose car-free transportation, rideshare, or remote parking. Yet the project anticipates daily attendance levels of 20–40 clients plus tenants, staff, and classroom participants. In practice, many visitors, particularly those traveling from outside Berkeley, will continue to arrive by car regardless of incentives.

### **Parking Displacement Rather Than Reduction**

The plan directs drivers to park west of Sixth Street rather than near the site. This approach does not reduce parking demand; it merely shifts impacts onto adjacent residential streets. The City's obligation under zoning law is to prevent neighborhood degradation, not redistribute impacts geographically.

### **Absence of Guaranteed Off-Street Parking for Clients**

While staff and office tenants are required to obtain monthly parking leases at the SteelWave garage, no equivalent guaranteed option is provided for clients or class participants. This omission means peak parking demand will continue to rely on already constrained public streets.

### **Limited Enforcement Mechanisms**

Although fines are proposed for parking violations, enforcement depends on neighbors reporting vehicles and on RBI successfully identifying individual visitors. Prior experience at this location demonstrated that staff often lacked vehicle information and were unable to resolve conflicts, such as driveways blocked by parked cars. The resubmittal does not establish a verifiable enforcement system capable of preventing recurring impacts.

### **Unverified Assumptions About Parking Availability**

The Parking Minimization Plan asserts that parking is more available evenings and weekends. Residents' lived experience differs significantly, particularly following recent street redesigns and daylighting requirements that removed approximately 50–55 on-street parking spaces near Bancroft Way and Sixth Street. Extended evening and weekend operations would therefore introduce activity precisely when residents rely most on neighborhood quiet and parking access.

### **3. Public Welfare and Residential Livability**

Under Berkeley Municipal Code Title 23, zoning regulations are intended to protect public health, safety, and welfare

Extended operating hours introduce continuous arrival and departure cycles, rideshare activity, conversation noise, vehicle door closures, and circulation impacts beyond traditional business hours. Even where individual events are minor, cumulative impacts over a 76-hour weekly schedule materially alter residential living conditions.

Weekend operations are especially concerning because they eliminate predictable periods of neighborhood respite.

### **4. Parking Constraints and Changed Conditions**

Neighborhood conditions have materially changed since prior uses occupied the building:

- Loss of approximately 50–55 nearby parking spaces due to intersection redesign and daylighting regulations
- Increased residential density through ADUs, townhomes, and multi-family housing
- High dependence on street parking by existing residents
- High presence of elderly and mobility-limited residents unable to park several blocks away
- Reduction of nearby public transit options, including the discontinuation of the Sixth Street bus route in recent years

These cumulative conditions significantly reduce the neighborhood's capacity to absorb intensified use.

### **5. Prior Use Experience and Real-World Outcomes**

Residents' concerns are informed by direct experience with previous operations at this site where recommended parking practices were not consistently followed by visitors despite stated policies. Human behavior consistently favors convenience over guidance. Planning decisions must therefore evaluate likely real-world outcomes rather than aspirational management plans.

Because RBI's mitigation strategy depends on education, incentives, and after-the-fact fines rather than physical infrastructure or enforceable conditions, the proposal presents substantial risk of ongoing noncompliance that would be difficult to monitor or enforce.

### **6. Emergency Response Corridor Preservation**

Sixth Street functions as an informal emergency response corridor used by fire, police, and medical services. The addition of 20-40 new visitors daily within a two to three block radius on Sixth Street closest to the building without on-site parking may increase circulation traffic,

parking searches, and lane obstruction on an already congested street. Combined with the recently installed traffic signal at Sixth and Bancroft, these conditions risk degrading emergency vehicle response times, contrary to Berkeley General Plan policies and California Fire Code requirements to maintain unobstructed emergency access routes.

## 7. Request for Conditions or Denial

Given the above considerations, we respectfully request that the Zoning Adjustments Board deny the proposed expansion of operating hours as incompatible with LMDR zoning intent and neighborhood livability.

Alternatively, if approval is granted, we request that the Board impose protective conditions including:

- A limited pilot program allowing:
  - No more than one evening per week
  - No more than one weekend day per month
- Mandatory data collection by a neutral third party on:
  - Parking utilization
  - Traffic activity
  - Noise impacts
  - Documented neighborhood complaints
- A required public review hearing before any future expansion of hours or programming intensity
- Demonstrated secured off-street parking solutions prior to any additional operational expansion

## 8. Conclusion

While we appreciate the applicant's effort to develop a Parking Minimization Plan, the proposed operational intensity remains inconsistent with the residential character defined by the Berkeley General Plan and protected under the Zoning Ordinance. Without meaningful limits on hours and scale, the project risks creating sustained nuisance conditions and degrading neighborhood livability over time.

Thank you for your careful consideration.

Sincerely,

### West Berkeley Neighbors

Zack T. G. & Raquel C.  
*2321 Sixth Street*

Dan G.  
*2313 Sixth Street*

Robert E.  
*2316 Sixth St.*

Marv Beth T.  
*2323 Sixth Street*

Fred, Mary, Angela B.  
*2315 Sixth Street*

Erika S.  
*2317 Sixth Street*