

Late Correspondence

Received before Noon Tuesday, June 30, 2026

Planning Commission July 1, 2026

From: kelly_hammargren
To: [Planning Commission](#)
Subject: July 1, Planning Commission Meeting Correspondence
Date: Tuesday, June 30, 2026 11:04:45 AM

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 and Planning Department Staff,

Included in this email is an excerpt from my Activist's Diary published in the Berkeley Daily Planet on Monday, October 9, 2023. <https://www.berkeleydailyplanet.com/issue/2023-10-04/article/50432?headline=A-BERKELEY-ACTIVIST-S-DIARY-PART-2--Kelly-Hammargren>

I have highlighted the temperature difference measured in Portland Oregon during the June 2021 heat dome catastrophe. It was a full 8° hotter in the neighborhoods with few trees.

When temperatures reach toward and past 100° adding another 8° is a serious difference.

We don't think much about heat waves here in Berkeley, but they do happen and will happen more frequently in the future on our warming planet.

The statement by a commissioner that the trees in the medians are useless fails to recognize the importance of the tall London Plane trees with large canopies on San Pablo Avenue. Trees in the medians that have space to grow moderate the heat island effect. Small trees in sidewalks do not have the same effect to moderate the microclimate that results from the swath of hardscape, concrete, asphalt, that will come with the changes being proposed for changing zoning.

It is reckless to ignore the importance of trees and foolish to think that putting small trees in sidewalks will undo the microclimate harm of walls of tall buildings disturbing air circulation and trapping air.

The London plane trees a cross between the American sycamore and the Oriental plane tree do not contribute to the ecosystem as the oaks do, but their contributions to moderating heat island effect cannot be dismissed as useless. London plane trees provide shade in the summer and drop their leaves in the fall to let the sun shine through in the winter.

Oaks are an identified keystone plant because of the vast numbers of species they support with some varieties of oaks supporting more than 300 species of insects and birds. The London plane trees are widely planted in cities as they are highly tolerant of urban conditions including drought and pollution. London plan trees can grow to over 100 feet tall and survive for hundreds of years with records of trees surviving 200 to 400 years. There are London plane trees planted in London in the 1640s that are still alive.

If you need a boost to your understanding of nature and health pick up *Good Nature: Why Seeing, Smelling, Hearing and Touching Plants is Good for Our Health*, by Kathy Willis, 2024, 336 pages is a place to start.

If you need a better understanding of oak trees and ecosystems pick up *The Nature of Oaks* by Douglas W. Tallamy, 2021.

In fact, why not both both books on the top of your summer reading.

Activist's Diary, October 9, 2023

The local heat wave officially ended Saturday at 11 pm. Nearly 9000 lost power in San Francisco Friday evening. The power wasn't out for long, hours not days, but it left me wondering how the UC Berkeley students will fair in the future in their rooms with no windows when the power goes out.

Cities and buildings in warm climates used to be designed around air flow and breezes to moderate temperatures, but with air conditioning that design and planning ended. Power failures in heat waves turn buildings with few options for ventilation into furnaces.

I pay a lot more attention to these things after reading Jeff Goodell's book *The Heat Will Kill You First: Life and Death on a Scorched Planet*. The book starts with rather startling statistics too many to list here, but there were several things that stuck. **The recorded high temperature in Portland, Oregon during that June 2021 heat dome was 116°, but Vivek Shandas who studies urban heat islands drove around Portland measuring air temperature. In the poorest areas with few trees and lots of concrete the temperature was 124°. That is called urban heat island effect.**

Over 650 people in Oregon, Washington and Canada died from the June 2021 Northwest heat wave.

We actually change the micro climate when we cut down trees and cover the land with buildings, concrete and asphalt. And, that is exactly what we are doing in this endless pursuit of adding housing without thought to building cities for a heating future and making space and place for nature to survive and cooling trees with large canopies.

Nearly every mixed-use housing tower being approved in Berkeley is a state density project with 90% of the units at market rate (luxury priced) when what is needed is around 40% of the units to be affordable.

kelly hammargren
Berkeley resident