

Burns, Anne M

From: Karimzadegan, Niloufar
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2025 1:46 PM
To: Burns, Anne M
Subject: FW: Comments to Design Review Board - 2942 COLLEGE AVENUE PRELIMINARY DESIGN REVIEW Design Review #DRCP2022-0015

From: Patrick Randolph <randolph.patrick@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 15, 2025 10:33 AM
To: Karimzadegan, Niloufar <NKarimzadegan@berkeleyca.gov>; Planning Dept. Mailbox <Planning@berkeleyca.gov>; Planning Dept. Mailbox <Planning@berkeleyca.gov>
Subject: Comments to Design Review Board - 2942 COLLEGE AVENUE PRELIMINARY DESIGN REVIEW Design Review #DRCP2022-0015

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 Design Review Committee Members,

I am writing to express my serious concerns regarding the proposed development at 2942 College Avenue (Project #DRCP2022-0015). As a resident directly adjacent to the proposed rear residential building, a parent of young children who hopes to grow our family in this home, I have several significant concerns about how this project conflicts with the design review criteria established in the Berkeley Municipal Code.

1. Neighborhood Compatibility (BMC 23.406.070)

The proposed two-story residential building at the rear of the lot is significantly out of scale with the surrounding commercial and residential structures and would create an intrusive presence that dramatically alters the character of our block. The Elmwood Commercial District guidelines specifically call for sensitive transitions to adjacent residential properties, which this proposal fails to provide. It also significantly alters the very deliberate and intentionally maintained look throughout the Elmwood Commercial sector along College Avenue that we fell in love with when looking for homes in Berkeley. Adding an additional eight feet would make it stick out like a sore thumb.

2. Shadowing/Solar Access

The proposed height and mass of the rear building would cast substantial shadows on my property throughout the year, dramatically reducing solar access to my home and garden. Berkeley's design guidelines specifically note that projects should minimize shadowing of adjacent properties, yet no alternative designs were shown that could achieve that obligation. **A shadow study is presented for your consideration and approval but it is fatally flawed because, it fails to correctly take into account my home (2925 Benvenue),** which abuts the proposed development and would suffer the greatest impact. It's as if our home does not exist! If you look at the renderings presented in your package for this agenda item, you will see that only two homes are reflected on our parcel when there are actually three. **My home, 2925 is closest to the proposed development but has been left out of the study.** This was confirmed in an email with Studio KDA staff in November 2023, but has never been remedied. If you make findings based upon the study presented, you would be doing so based upon a study that is just factually wrong and misleading and therefore open to challenge.

3. Inadequate Setbacks

Based on the proposal, the setbacks appear insufficient to provide adequate light, air, and separation between the new structure and existing residences. The building would create a "walled-in" effect for adjacent properties.

4. Traffic and Parking Impacts

The addition of a bustling new restaurant as well as six new dwelling units without any apparent parking mitigation plan will exacerbate the already challenging parking situation in our neighborhood and increase traffic on our residential streets.

5. Excessive Massing and Intensity

The proposal to place six total dwelling units on this relatively modest lot represents an excessive intensification that is incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood pattern. The rear building's 2,968 square feet **over two stories not accounting for the peaked roof that blocks our sun** creates a massive structure that would dominate the rear of the property and is not comparable to other apartments in the immediate neighborhood (I'm thinking of Jess's back apartments but we would want to make sure first and may just want to end the sentence after the word "property")

6. Privacy Impacts

The placement of the rear building with its height would create direct sightlines into my private living spaces and backyard where we are raising two young children. The windows and potential balconies/deck spaces would eliminate all privacy for my property.

Requested Actions: Reject the current proposal and require significant redesign of the rear building

Given the significant impacts this development would have on the livability and character of our neighborhood, I respectfully request that the Design Review Committee deny the current proposal and require substantial modifications before any approval is granted.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

--
Best Regards,

Patrick Randolph

Burns, Anne M

From: Karimzadegan, Niloufar
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2025 1:47 PM
To: Burns, Anne M
Subject: FW: Concerns about 2942 College Avenue project

From: Katelyn Randolph <katelyn@imagiknit.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 15, 2025 10:29 AM
To: Planning Dept. Mailbox <Planning@berkeleyca.gov>; Karimzadegan, Niloufar <NKarimzadegan@berkeleyca.gov>
Subject: Concerns about 2942 College Avenue project

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Hello,

My name is Katelyn Randolph and I am the owner of ImagiKnit (a specialty craft shop) located at 2921 College Avenue, across the street from the proposed project (2942 College Avenue). I am also a homeowner in the Elmwood district.

I have serious concerns about the 2942 College Avenue project. I am also concerned that residents were given barely 4 days (following a posted letter that could have easily been missed) to share their concerns. This has not allowed us merchants adequate time to meet and discuss the proposition and its impacts.

I chose to open my business here in the Elmwood entirely because of its unique architecture, the strong sense of community and historical charm. The Elmwood merchants have a responsibility to uphold all that makes the Elmwood great. We have a strong and connected Merchant Association, have to adhere by specific rules unique to the Elmwood, and even pay an additional yearly tax to the city. The Elmwood is known for our "Main Street" vibes boasting small mom and pop stores and amenities like a movie theater, post office, bank and market. Architects such as Walter Radclidd and Hutchinson & Mills contributed to the 1920s appeal of College Avenue using tile and low scale buildings to maintain that "Main Street" feeling that draws homeowners and shoppers to the Elmwood.

The renderings proposed by KDA Studio for the 2942 College Avenue are completely out of touch with the existing style and scale of the Elmwood. The 2900 block is flanked by two story buildings at each corner as an anchor. To disrupt the skyline by proposing a two-story mixed use building with contemporary design elements fails to harmonize with the established aesthetic of our business district. It is extremely imbalanced and even more concerning, would set a dangerous precedent to commercialize the block.

Our business district already faces significant parking challenges. The addition of a mixed-use building with food service but apparently limited dedicated parking will exacerbate these challenges, making it more difficult for customers to access my and neighboring business. This will also impact the neighbors on the side streets who will see increased issues with street parking.

I want to see this neighborhood thrive and I absolutely support the renovation of 2942 College Avenue. However the proposed renderings are not a harmonious match for the neighborhood or the space. We desperately need more specialty retail shops (the backbone of the Elmwood and true to the Elmwood's history) to allow us to lessen our dependence on big box stores outside of our community.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to elaborating on these concerns at the next opportunity.

Best,
Katelyn Randolph

Owner of ImagiKnit
2921 College Avenue
Berkeley CA 94705

Burns, Anne M

From: Karimzadegan, Niloufar
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2025 1:46 PM
To: Burns, Anne M
Subject: FW: 2942 College Avenue project
Attachments: IMG_3930.HEIC; IMG_3933.HEIC; IMG_3931.HEIC

From: Katelyn Randolph <cowan.km@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 15, 2025 10:44 AM
To: Planning Dept. Mailbox <Planning@berkeleyca.gov>; Karimzadegan, Niloufar <NKarimzadegan@berkeleyca.gov>
Subject: 2942 College Avenue project

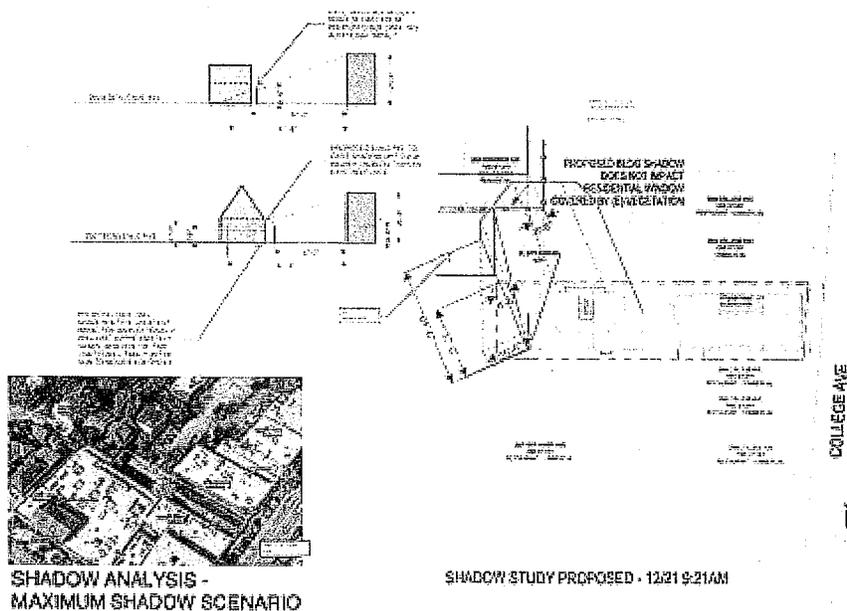
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Hello,

My name is Katelyn Randolph and I am the co-owner of 2925 Benvenue Avenue.

I have significant concerns about the 2942 College Avenue mixed use proposal, specifically about Building 2 which will hold 4 residential units.

The impacted residents of Benvenue Avenue have not been offered adequate time, communication or information about this project and we look forward to having our concerns heard at the next opportunity. KDA Studio failed to provide an accurate shade study (attached here) that even acknowledges the existence of our property (2925 Benvenue Avenue). It only shows the home in front of ours (2927 Benvenue) and then 2929 Benvenue which is at street level.



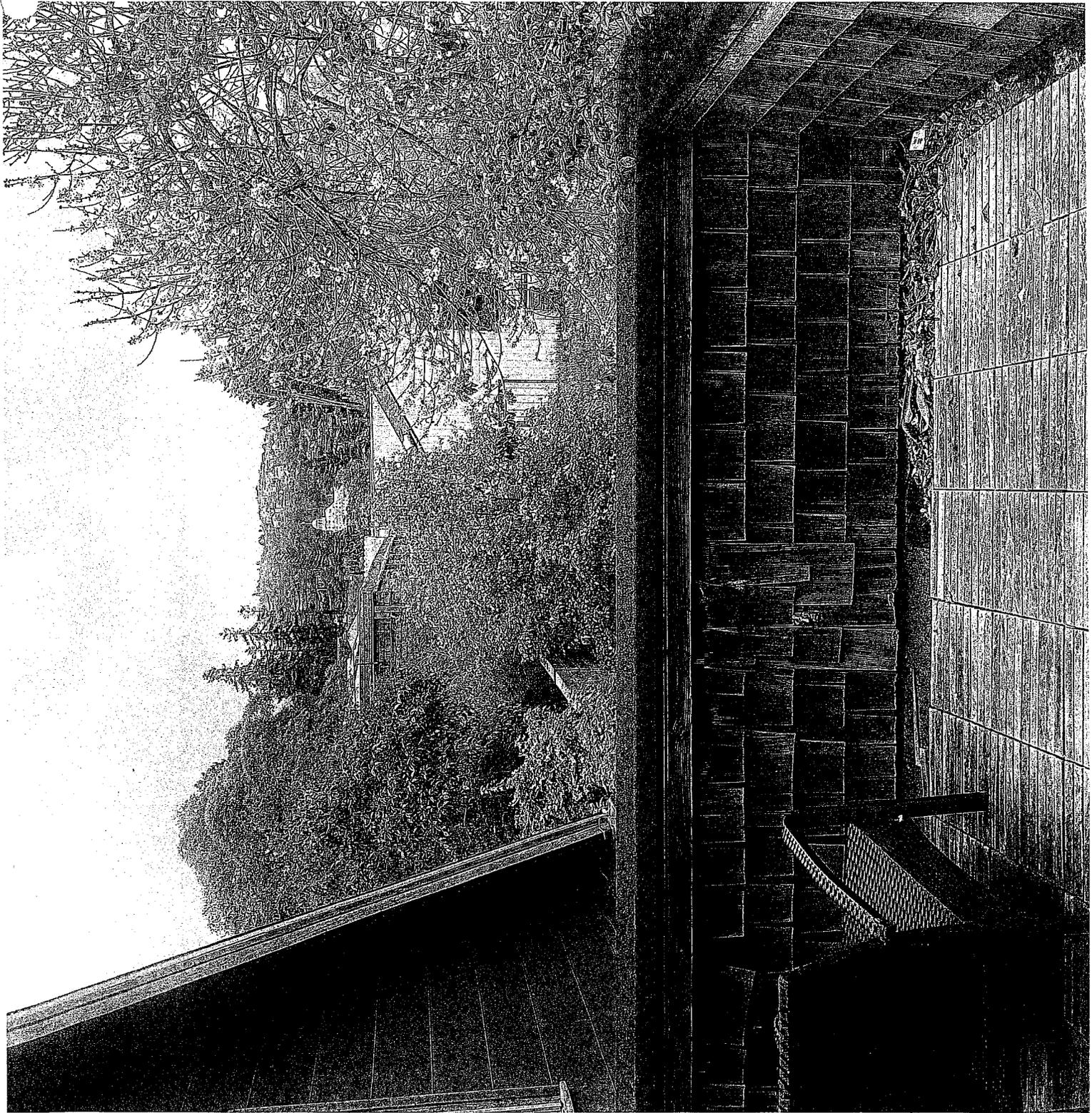
We are the third house, flanked on both sides by other properties. This residential building would completely box our home in. We fell in love with our property because of the backyard deck, small grassy yard and second floor balcony. I will attach a photo from INSIDE our home looking out to our deck. The proposal would place a 30+ foot structure directly behind our barely 7 foot high fence (shown). The view the residents will have from this vantage point will be directly into our bedroom (photo attached, taken from our bedroom looking out into the lot), our balcony (photo attached), and our back deck.

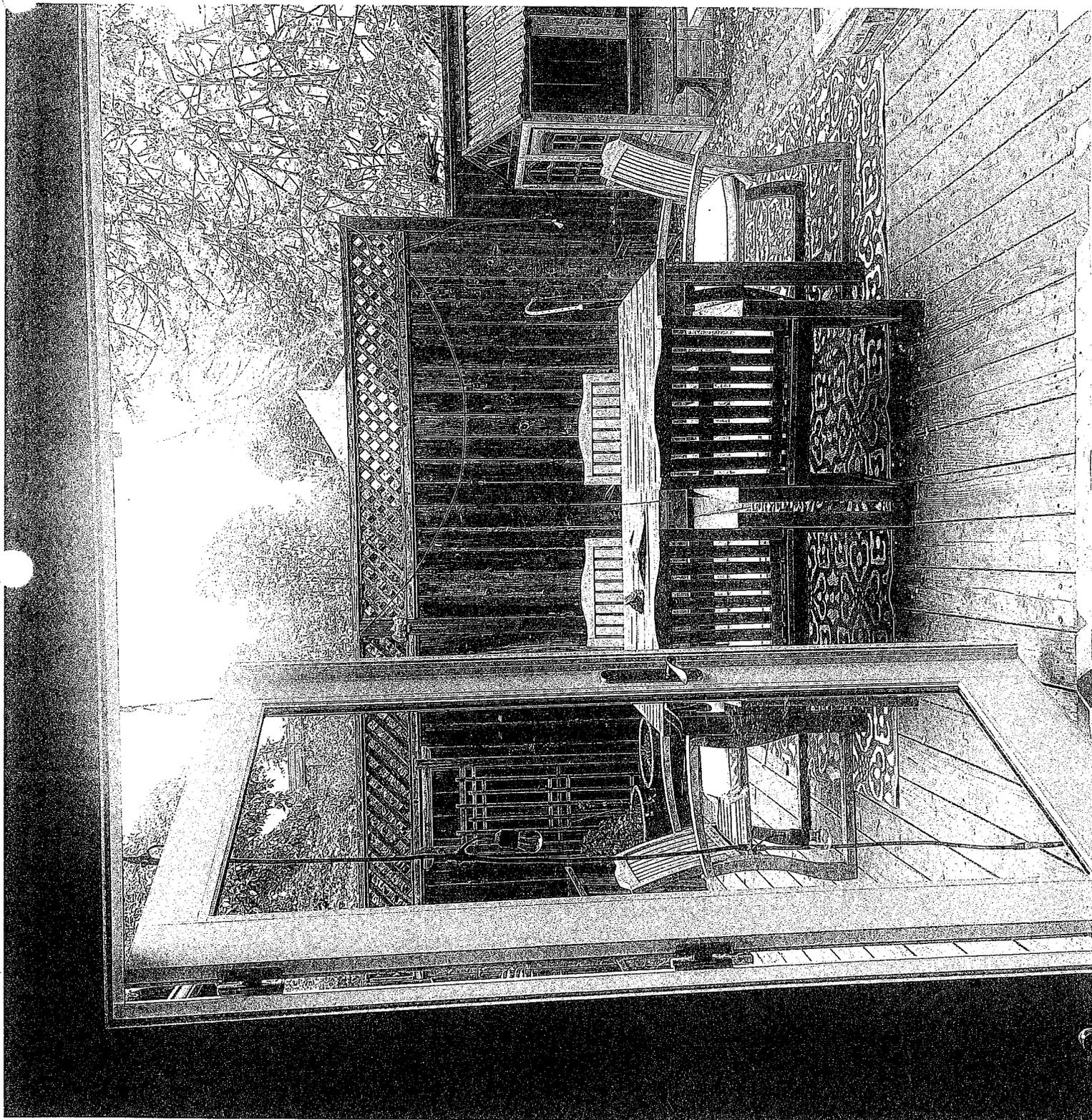
Can you explain to me how this is not a serious issue? This opens up our property to increased both safety and privacy issues as our back access would be compromised.

Myself and the community at large look forward to expressing these (and other) concerns at the next opportunity.

Best,
Katelyn Randolph







Burns, Anne M

From: Karimzadegan, Niloufar
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2025 1:45 PM
To: Burns, Anne M
Subject: FW: Mixed-Use Development in The Elmwood, Berkeley

From: Jessica Green <jessica@mrsdalloways.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 15, 2025 11:57 AM
To: Karimzadegan, Niloufar <NKarimzadegan@berkeleyca.gov>; Planning Dept. Mailbox <Planning@berkeleyca.gov>
Cc: Eric Green <ericg@mrsdalloways.com>; katelyn@imaginkit.com
Subject: Mixed-Use Development in The Elmwood, Berkeley

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My name is Jessica Green, co-owner/operator of Mrs. Dalloway's Literary & Garden Arts Bookstore at 2904 College Ave. I am unable to make the meeting and wanted to voice some concerns about the proposed Mixed-Use Development planned in The Elmwood district.

One of my concerns is the proposed facade of the new building. It has a modern style, is taller than the surrounding buildings, with little attempt at fitting in with the historic, quaint look of the rest of the block, or adjacent facades. The Elmwood business district and surrounding neighborhood has dedicated much energy, time and engagement into keeping the look and feel of The Elmwood intact over decades. There used to be a "Beautification Committee" that was instrumental in keeping phone lines underground, and other ongoing concerns. The look and feel is important to the community.

I am also concerned about the parking for the living units. We already have very limited parking and merchants have to pay for the limited passes we are allotted in the surrounding neighborhoods. We are not allocated parking spots directly behind our businesses in order to allow the public/shoppers the convenience of the locale. Where would these new tenants park their cars?

My final concern is that the retail space is planned for another restaurant. There are already many competing restaurants/cafes along this stretch and have lost a few homewares boutiques and clothing stores in the last few years. Might there be another, non-competing retail business that could fill the needs of our community?

The construction will be disruptive on an already crowded (two-lane) stretch of road, close to a major intersection. College Ave is a major thoroughfare from the campus to Oakland/freeways/BART station. I hope there is a plan to avoid much disruption both in traffic and parking.

Thank you for considering my concerns and those of neighboring businesses in The Elmwood.

--

Jessica Green

Mrs. Dalloway's Literary & Garden Arts Bookstore
2904 College Ave, Berkeley, CA 94705
(510) 704-8222 Phone

Burns, Anne M

From: Karimzadegan, Niloufar
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2025 1:45 PM
To: Burns, Anne M
Subject: FW: Concerns about 2942 College Ave

From: Tarah Ornelas <scentsbythebay@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 15, 2025 11:28 AM
To: Planning Dept. Mailbox <Planning@berkeleyca.gov>; Karimzadegan, Niloufar <NKarimzadegan@berkeleyca.gov>
Subject: Concerns about 2942 College Ave

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Hello,

I'm the owner of Scents by the Bay - I'm concerned about a few things with this project:

- how will the construction impact all of us businesses
- this design does not fit with the feel and history of the Elmwood. And having a raised roofline in the middle of the street doesn't fit
- we do NOT need another food spot on our street, we need more variety of vendors
- where are the 6 new units going to park? Parking is already very hard.

Regards,

Tarah

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