

Late Correspondence #3

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Planning Commission October 7, 2026



Late Communication, Planning Commission meeting

From Alison LaBonte <alison.labonte@gmail.com>

Date Wed 10/7/2026 5:03 PM

To Horner, Justin <JHorner@berkeleyca.gov>; Planning Commission <PlanningPC@berkeleyca.gov>

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Dear Commissioners,

I am a West Berkeley resident living at 6th and Addison. Thank you for considering my following comments related to the Development Agreement for 600 Bancroft.

I have two primary interests in the terms of this Development agreement, should the development move forward: 1) that the newly constructed building serves a purpose (leases are filled with business tenants or an alternative during interim period until business tenants move in), and 2) that the Development Agreement with the City include community meeting space for use by the neighboring community and the City of Berkeley at no cost, as would be available were there a Community Center in this area of Berkeley.

Use (i.e. occupancy) of new development:

I understand that the City needs to attract and accommodate new development to a degree to maintain vibrancy, opportunities for local jobs, and increased tax revenue with the increase in property values that come with development. However, I've watched the construction of the Berkeley Commons at 600 Addison, which had significant negative impact on Waterside Workshops through the construction period, and in the years since, still stands entirely vacant from what I can tell. My assumption is there was no plan or assessment of the demand in the market for bioscience laboratory space that the Berkeley Commons building offers before the developer went ahead with constructing. While I'm curious to learn who is covering the losses, how this prior development was at all financially feasible, my main concern now is what does this next developer and the City of Berkeley have planned to ensure this building at 600 Bancroft, once constructed, doesn't stand vacant for years as well. Might the City require the Developer to produce a market assessment, gain letters of support from potential business tenants (such as the tenants in the current buildings at 600 Bancroft that will be demolished) stating the current lease price and what lease price they could afford to pay to stay tenants and businesses operating in our city?

In addition, I ask that the City plan for the worst (i.e. that no new tenants move in for a significant duration) and include in the Development Agreement terms the ability for the City and neighboring community to access and use the property for alternative positive use. I understand that the Developer will have liability concerns on use of a building when it stands vacant, and they are trying to claim tax breaks for the vacancy. However, this is not a reason to allow a building to stand totally vacant and unused for years if the promise with the development was to bring in business.

Community Meeting Space

I am a part of a facilitation team of the "Waterfront Pod", a neighbor pod organizing our neighbors locally in response to the 47th federal administration. We would appreciate a Community Meeting space on city property to meet and organize in our area (University to Ashby, the waterfront to San Pablo). Currently there are no public buildings with meeting space for community use in this area. Presumably R&D

business will not have need nor be disrupted by gathering of the community in a ground level meeting spaces made available in the evening hours (5-9pm) for a meeting among community and onsite childcare at the dreamworks playground and/or inside the 600 Bancroft. Security personnel for the building would presumably be onsite and staffing the property anyway in this time window. I ask that the City and Developer think creatively to accommodate this incredibly easy to deliver benefit back to the community.

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