



LIVABLE BERKELEY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 4
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City Council Candidates Present Their Vision for Downtown

As part of our preparation for the October 18 City Council candidate forum (see announcement on right), Livable Berkeley invited the ten candidates for City Council to respond in writing to several questions affecting the city's future. Featured in this issue are excerpts from their responses to the following: "What is your vision for the downtown, and how will you accomplish it? What are the obstacles to new downtown development, and how will you overcome them?" Seven of the ten candidates responded. The entire text of their responses can be found on our web site: www.livableberkeley.org.

Max Anderson (District 3)

The downtown area should be designated a transit village. It is already the hub of multiple transit lines, and we should acknowledge, embrace, and accentuate that naturally occurring reality. Housing is an urgent necessity for downtown to correct the jobs-housing imbalance. I support the David Brower Center, which will provide affordable housing, as well as offices for environmental groups. Increasing access to public transit through class pass and eco-pass ideas is another important solution that should be dramatically expanded. Ideally, we would also have an affordable full-service grocery store somewhere on a ground floor, with a day care center, and affordable housing above. The hotel/conference center might provide funding to help create a pedestrian corridor, and/or above-grounding the creek, as well as providing ongoing city tax revenue. I strongly support transit corridor connections, such as linking the Rapid Bus on San Pablo to the downtown and UC, as well as linking our improving train station at the foot of University Avenue with the new Rapid Bus on Telegraph.

Laurie Capitelli (District 5)

The revitalization of the downtown encompasses many difficult issues including parking availability, service levels of public transit, homelessness, inappropriate use and blight (the single-story Bank of America building, the Alta Bates satellite parking lot, abandoned auto uses near Parker St., etc.). I strongly support the development of a signature design hotel conference center, provided that the project has a strong link to a museum complex. I also support the continued construction of housing in the downtown. That housing should be targeted toward ownership and (to the degree possible) nonstudent permanent residents. There have been significant changes in the parking inventory over the past year, with more anticipated in the next few years. There needs to be a constant monitoring of the situation as we evaluate the need for additional supply or adjustments in parking management policy. We need to develop more efficient shared use of available parking with UC. We also need to provide safe bicycle access to the downtown with secure storage available.

Barbara Gilbert (District 5)

I believe that that we need to encourage more well-chosen larger anchor businesses in Berkeley—in attractive settings (possibly landscaped vertical malls of four stories maximum), to provide goods and services unavailable in smaller establishments and to anchor revived commercial areas downtown and along University Avenue. This will help to increase overall commercial vitality and traffic, and to substantially expand the sales tax base. We should not concede this

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**Livable Berkeley
City Council Candidate Forum
Our Next Event—Monday,
Oct. 18, 7:30-9 p.m.,
North Berkeley Senior Center,
Hearst & MLK Jr. Way**
Join us and the candidates for City Council in a lively discussion of issues affecting the City's future. For more information, call Livable Berkeley at 510.587.3390.

**Have We Got
a T-Shirt for You!**
The new Livable Berkeley T-shirts are now available. With white lettering on Forest Green cotton, they say "YIMBY—yes in my backyard" on the front and have the Livable Berkeley logo on the back. For information on prices and ordering, see page 4.



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Overweight SUVs—Affecting the Quality of Urban Living

by Joe DiStefano

There's a new buzz about sport utility vehicles: many are illegal to drive on a majority of streets throughout California. As brought to light in a recent article in the online magazine *Slate*, vehicle laws in cities from Los Angeles to San Francisco prohibit any vehicle over 6,000 pounds on many streets. The reasons include increased street damage caused by heavy vehicles, higher noise and pollution levels, and health and safety concerns.

Almost 40 current models break the 6,000-pound barrier. There are the obvious heavyweights, such as the Hummer H2 and Ford Excursion, and then there's the luxury BMW X5, the Mercedes M-Class, and even the Volkswagen Touareg.

It's no wonder there are more of these heavy vehicles on the roads today than just a few years ago. Federal tax law allows business owners to deduct up to \$100,000 of the price of a 6,000-plus-pound "light truck." Add to that a \$25,000 deduction allowed by California, and you begin to understand why the BMW X5 tips the scales

at 6,008 pounds. Dealers actually help buyers figure out how to claim the exemption. At the same time, the hybrid vehicle tax credit is being phased out by 25% per year, from \$2,000 in 2003 to nothing by 2006. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that of the 5,259 fatalities caused when light trucks struck cars in 1996, 81 percent of the fatally injured were occupants of the car. There are also consequences for the livability of our cities. Increasing numbers of heavy SUVs and light trucks are causing greater damage to roadways. More potholes and wear and tear means more time and money spent fixing and upgrading—money that cities like Berkeley have in short supply.

Berkeley does have a law banning 6,000-plus-pound vehicles from certain streets. But the ordinance in Berkeley, unlike in LA or San Francisco, is limited to commercial vehicles. It may be just a matter of time and citizen pressure before we join other cities in modifying our municipal code to include noncommercial vehicles in the "grossly overweight" category.

The Livable Berkeley City Council Candidate Forum

Be There!

Date: Monday, Oct. 18

Time: 7:30-9 p.m.

Place: North Berkeley Senior Center, Hearst & MLK Jr. Way

Livable Berkeley Teams Up with Other Groups to Support Bus Rapid Transit

Members of Livable Berkeley have formed an ad hoc group to study and support the proposed AC Transit Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. Also participating have been Rob Wrenn, chair of the Berkeley Transportation Commission, and Amber Crabbe of the Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TALC). The project envisions a dedicated bus right of way from San Leandro to Downtown Berkeley. For more information or to attend one of the group's upcoming meetings, contact Hank Resnik at hankr@earthlink.net.



The simulated photograph above shows a possible design for the Downtown Berkeley Bus Rapid Transit Station—with the existing view in the inset. Photo courtesy AC Transit.

Candidates on Downtown (cont'd.)

segment to Emeryville, Walnut Creek, or elsewhere. If we do this in the proper fashion, I think smaller boutique-type businesses will happily follow and fill a different market niche. It is entirely unrealistic to expect shoppers, families, the elderly, and disabled to use transit, except occasionally, especially if we are able to develop an attractive mix of retail that stays open during evening hours. We may need to consider a Municipal Parking Authority and use developer mitigation fees and a dedicated portion of the increased sales tax revenues to help pay for it.

Sharon Kidd (District 2)

A business person needs to know that there is a potential of reward for the risk he or she is assuming by conducting business in Berkeley. I will try to pinpoint the impediments that currently may exist in our fiscal and city codes that may have a negative effect on such business decisions. Once they have been targeted, I will try my best to eliminate anything that may be unreasonable. Let the business people know that they can make money by conducting an ethical business not encumbered by unreasonable barriers, and they will surely beat a path to the city of Berkeley.

Darryl Moore (District 2)

Obstacles to downtown development include: the suffering economy, fear, inertia, lack of understanding of what is/is not permitted, and the reputation of our land-use processes. While these impediments need to be resolved, we must recognize that there is a large amount of development under construction or under consideration right now. The David Brower Center is under consideration for environmental offices and housing. The UC hotel and museum complex offers multiple exciting possibilities.

Betty Olds (District 6)

The Berkeley downtown has the potential to be a healthy, vibrant place. But the economic downturn has left us with vacant storefronts, increased numbers of homeless people, aggressive panhandling and a

creeping sense of abandonment. I frequently hear complaints from constituents that when they get out of a movie at 11 p.m., there is no place open to go for a cup of tea and dessert. I always found it outrageous that we have 30,000 young people in town who stay up half the night and that we close up everything like we were a small town in the boonies. The Zoning Ordinance should be amended to allow businesses to stay open past 10 p.m. In addition our parking requirements are much too demanding for small businesses in the downtown core. Generally, we need an overhaul of our Zoning Adjustment Board attitudes, and we need to relax our requirements for businesses. Hopefully, the university will move forward with their vision for a hotel/museum complex, and the City will cooperate.

Jesse Townley (District 5)

Vitaly important to all downtown development is creating more inducements to move people out of cars and into alternate transportation methods. Building parking-free housing is not the answer, if only for the very real reason of evaporating

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After—and Before: Shattuck Ave. and University

The recently opened Bachenheimer Building (top), a mixed-use residential property owned by Panoramic Interests and designed by Kirk Peterson, recently opened at the intersection of Shattuck Avenue (East) and University. It replaced a one-story commercial building that was usually vacant and topped by a billboard.





Introducing Livable Berkeley's New Coordinator, Jennifer Phelps

Jennifer Phelps, pictured at left, replaces our part-time coordinator, Allen Freeman. Allen received his MBA from the Haas Business School in June, after which he returned to hometown Santa Monica and a position as a leading proponent of transit-oriented development. In addition to overseeing the details of Livable Berkeley's operations, Jennifer is an administrative assistant at the firm of Design, Community, & Environment. Having traveled and lived around the world, Jennifer has experienced numerous cities first-hand. "I keep coming back to Berkeley because I've loved it since I moved here in 1992," she says. "I've been here as a tourist, a transplanted student, a young graduate, and now a bona fide citizen, so I have appreciated Berkeley from several angles. I'm excited to part of keeping Berkeley moving in the right direction."

Livable Berkeley T-Shirt—The Back Story

Yes, this is the back view of the handsome new Forest Green Livable Berkeley T-Shirt. The front of the shirt, shown on page 1, proudly proclaims "YIMBY—yes in my backyard." Get your own now for \$15. Contact Jennifer Phelps at 510.587.3390 or e-mail her at info@livableberkeley.org.



Candidates (con'd.)

public transit funds. We can promote a Berkeley-specific feel to the businesses without falling into the trap of revitalizing downtown to the point where lower- and middle-class shoppers are priced out of their own city center. Encouraging local ownership (to the point of helping locals buy out other local businesses that decide to sell their business, for instance), local businesses, and local employment in decently paid jobs will go a long way towards revitalizing downtown on a human, Berkeley level. We need low-income apartments that are actually low-income, as well as more family housing. Two and three bedrooms are not as lucrative as single-bedroom or studio apartments, but they serve the current Berkeley community as well as new arrivals. The City can and should demand serious attention to such housing from prospective developers.



Livable Berkeley
1442A Walnut Street, #202
Berkeley, CA 94709
Tel. 510.587.3390
www.livableberkeley.org.

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COORDINATOR

Jennifer Phelps