



# LIVABLE BERKELEY NEWSLETTER

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## Renowned New Urbanist Peter Calthorpe to Address Livable Berkeley Forum October 6

Livable Berkeley members have a great evening in store on Thursday, October 6, when Peter Calthorpe will be our featured speaker for a members-only event focusing on the future of Downtown Berkeley.

Calthorpe, a local resident and member of Livable Berkeley, is known internationally for creating and fostering diverse and walkable communities—from inner-city neighborhoods and first-ring suburbs to complete new-town developments and comprehensive regional plans. His work includes major projects in urban, new-town, and suburban settings in the United States and abroad. Calthorpe is a founder of the Congress of New Urbanism and became its first president.



*Peter Calthorpe*

Calthorpe's design philosophy has been influential across disciplines. His defining work in sustainable communities, urban revitalization, and transit-oriented development has helped to shape a set of alternatives to sprawl at the regional and neighborhood scale.

Calthorpe will talk about innovative actions in other cities that are re-energizing downtowns and discuss approaches that might apply to Berkeley. He will also lead an extended discussion with Livable Berkeley members to identify issues and possible visions for Berkeley's Downtown that are consistent with Livable Berkeley's commitment to smart growth and sustainability.

The impetus for the meeting comes primarily from the recent agreement between the City of Berkeley and the University

of California to work together expeditiously to prepare a new comprehensive Downtown Area Plan (see article on the agreement, page 4). The plan will encompass both the private and public sectors, including proposed university growth and change. In addition, the agreement includes possible public/private partnerships, all working within a common town/gown plan with specific development envelopes and design guidelines.

This commitment to joint planning provides a major opportunity to help achieve a revitalized and more intensively used downtown. The stated focus in the agreement on sustainability, livability, and vitality can return our Downtown to its historic role as the crossroads and heart of Berkeley while meeting community and campus needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

*continued on last page*

**Hold the Date!**

**Thursday, October 6, 7-9 p.m.,  
Berkeley City Club, 2315  
Durant Ave.**

**Come share ideas with Peter Calthorpe and other members of Livable Berkeley. This event is open to all Livable Berkeley members, including one guest, at no charge.**

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# Commercial Real Estate— Adjusting to Berkeley’s Realities

Livable Berkeley’s Plan and Policy Committee met recently to learn more about the climate for commercial real estate and its contribution to the city’s economic health.

The three presenters were Tom Meyers, the city’s acting Manager of Economic Development; Soheyl Modaressi, a developer best known locally for the “restaurant row” block of Center Street between Shattuck and Oxford; and commercial real estate broker John Gordon.

All agreed that the context in Berkeley is different from surrounding communities. Large malls and “big box” retail stores are “impossible” here, meaning almost all “large hard goods” purchases (with the exception of automobiles) happen elsewhere. The recent departures of downtown stores like Gateway and Eddie Bauer, which functioned partly as “showrooms” for Internet sales, showed that even that model hasn’t worked very well.

In contrast, Gordon characterized the city’s best opportunities for economic

success as “smaller scale, lifestyle” businesses: food, entertainment, convenience, books, photography, health clubs, and the like. Done consistently, for example, that emphasis would bring more vibrancy to the downtown, especially after two new hotels (the Carpenter & Co. project at Shattuck and Center and an expected Westin rehab of the Shattuck Hotel) bring in more tourists and transient visitors.

Tom Meyers praised the recent increase in “mixed-use development relative to transit nodes and corridors.” He favors “continuous commercial development,” with housing above retail, on all of Berkeley’s main streets. But with 26 identified commercial districts in the city, Meyers says we lack the resources to more fully evolve them. “Business improvement districts” may help raise some funds, he said.

Modaressi focused on the need for commercial developers to be “proactive”—not to wait for tenants to show up but to “go after them,” as he has done for his new gourmet food public market near Chez Panisse.

Asked about the apparent large proportion of vacant storefronts in new commercial buildings, Gordon counseled patience. Since initial build-outs can be expensive, many building owners prefer to “set the lease high and wait,” rather than bring in a bare-bones tenant, on the grounds that leases to subsequent tenants then are much easier, he said.

When asked what Livable Berkeley might do to assist desirable projects, all three recommended being vocal with comments to city bodies that often hear only from those opposed to a project, not those in the community who are supportive of economic development.

Meetings of Livable Berkeley standing committees are open to all current members.

*Guest presenters at Livable Berkeley’s meeting on commercial development praised mixed-used projects like the one at Shattuck Ave. and Delaware St. shown below. Eventually, they said, the street-level storefronts will gain long-term tenants.*



# Livable Berkeley Welcomes New Members to Our Board of Directors

Four new members have joined the Livable Berkeley board of directors, replacing former board members Ben Grant, Jennifer Kaufer, and Hank Resnik.

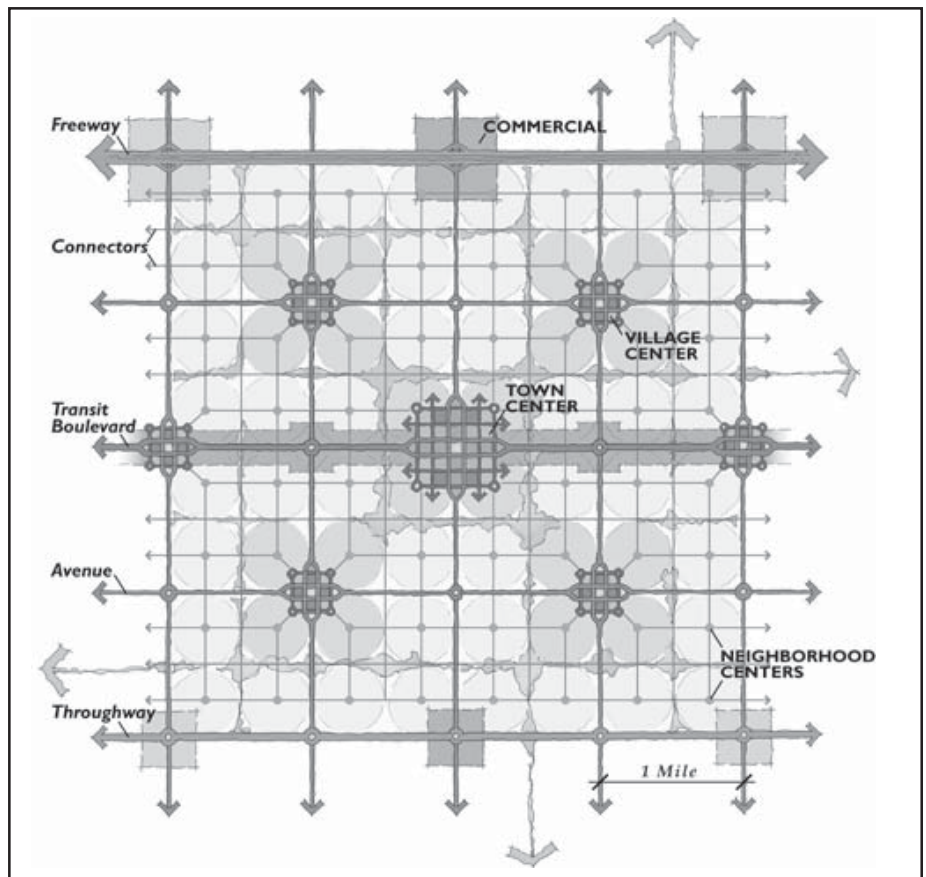
**Joe DiStefano** has been a Berkeley resident for more than 10 years. He brings more than a decade of national and international experience in urban planning and design to the Livable Berkeley board. His professional expertise is in the coordination of land use with transportation systems, with a focus on transit and pedestrian-oriented development that promotes automobile alternatives, housing choice, and community diversity. A leader in his central Berkeley neighborhood, Joe is also an avid cyclist and amateur carpenter.

**Peter Levitt** has lived in Berkeley for 20 years, residing in South, West, and North Berkeley neighborhoods. After graduating from UC Berkeley, he cooked at Oliveto and Chez Panisse, then taught mathematics at King and Portola Middle schools before returning to the restaurant business. In 1995 he and his partner took over the helm of Saul's Restaurant and Delicatessen and oversaw the rebuilding of the business. Peter's long-time involvement in the community led to his interest in Berkeley's development process and future, especially the effect development has on small businesses and the resulting character of the city.

**Eve Stewart** has worked in the field of urban planning and real estate development for over eight years. Her professional experience in both the private and nonprofit sectors has focused on affordable housing development, economic revitalization, and public finance. Having lived and worked in Berkeley since 2000, Eve has found that walking to work is just one of the many benefits of living here.

**Betsy Thagard** is a mother, a smart growth advocate, and a real estate broker. She first moved to Berkeley in 1985 to attend graduate school at UC Berke-

ley. After several years in London, England, Cambridge, MA, and San Francisco, Betsy moved back to Berkeley in 2000. Now she's a resident for life. Her greatest hope is to see Berkeley become an even more wonderful place to live so that her children, when grown, will choose to remain here. During her years away from Berkeley, Betsy practiced non-profit environmental law as an advocate for smart growth and better transportation systems. She also served on the board of the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition and founded a pedestrian advocacy group called Walk SF. Professionally Betsy is a real estate broker affiliated with Red Oak Realty. You'll often see Betsy riding her bike, and occasionally driving her electric vehicle, around town.



*Peter Calthorpe, the featured speaker at Livable Berkeley's October 6 Forum (see page 1) has been named one of 25 "innovators on the cutting edge" by Newsweek Magazine for his work redefining the models of urban and suburban growth. He has had a long and honored career in the planning and architecture fields, combining his experience in both disciplines to develop an environmental approach to community development and urban design. His plan for an "Urban Network," above, is from Calthorpe's essay "The Urban Network: A New Framework for Growth." For more information go to [www.Calthorpe.com](http://www.Calthorpe.com).*

# Highlights of City/University Agreement on Downtown Berkeley

As part of the settlement of a lawsuit over the campus's 2020 Long Range Development Plan, Berkeley and the University of California agreed to conduct a joint planning process to revitalize the city's Downtown. The agreement requires that the city and university work together to develop a Downtown Area Plan (DAP) that will guide new university, private, and other public development projects. The new plan is to encourage transit-friendly development, protect historic resources, accommodate university growth, and maximize the use of land already owned by the university.

The settlement agreement includes support

for the proposed new AC Transit bus rapid transit system on Telegraph Avenue with a dedicated bus lane in the Downtown and a reduction in proposed parking to a maximum of 1,270 new university spaces in the next 10 years. Priority locations for new university parking will be based on the potential for shared use with the community. The agreement includes new City planning staff to work on the DAP, plus payments by the university to help cover city costs for the new planning efforts.

The entire agreement can be accessed on the City of Berkeley web site at <http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/mayor/pr/UCAgreement.pdf>.

**Livable Berkeley has been awarded official 501(c)3 nonprofit status by the IRS. All contributions are tax-deductible.**

## Calthorpe Event October 6 *continued from page 1*

In addition to Calthorpe's talk and the group discussion, Mark Rhoades of the Berkeley Planning Department will bring members up to speed on current and proposed projects slated for Downtown and more details of the City/University agreement.

Members will be invited to bring a guest

and to participate in an exciting discussion about what Downtown can be.

The Forum will be held Thursday, October 6 from 7–9 p.m. at the Berkeley City Club, 2315 Durant Ave. Watch the mail for your invitations. Mark your calendars and choose your lucky guest now!



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