



FINAL MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING SEPTEMBER 16, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m.

Location: North Berkeley Senior Center, 1901 Hearst Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709

1. ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: Savlan Hauser, Blaine Merker, Benjamin Bechtolsheim, Alfred Twu, Christine Oatfield, Shannon Allen (alternate), Darrell Owens, Angela Wang, Jamie Ruth (alternate).

Commissioners Absent: None

Staff Present: Secretary Alisa Shen, Planning and Development Deputy Director Alene Pearson, Clerks Joshua Muller and Branka Tatarevic.

2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Berkeley recognizes that the community we live in was built on the territory of xučyun (Huchiun (Hooch-yoon)), the ancestral and unceded land of the Chochenyo (Chochen-yo)-speaking Ohlone (Oh-low-nee) people, the ancestors and descendants of the sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County. This land was and continues to be of great importance to all of the Ohlone Tribes and descendants of the Verona Band. As we begin our meeting tonight, we acknowledge and honor the original inhabitants of Berkeley, the documented 5,000-year history of a vibrant community at the West Berkeley Shellmound, and the Ohlone people who continue to reside in the East Bay. We recognize that Berkeley's residents have and continue to benefit from the use and occupation of this uncended stolen land since the City of Berkeley's incorporation in 1878. As stewards of the laws regulating the City of Berkeley, it is not only vital that we recognize the history of this land, but also recognize that the Ohlone people are present members of Berkeley and other East Bay communities today. The City of Berkeley will continue to build relationships with the Lisjan Tribe and to create meaningful actions that uphold the intention of this land acknowledgement.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA: 5

4. ORDER OF AGENDA: No change

5. CHAIRPERSON REPORT: None

6. AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEES AND LIASON COMMENTS: None

7. COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS: None

8. STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

a. Upcoming PC Meeting Items:

- **Next meeting: October 7. Agenda item(s) anticipated at this time:**
 - Public Hearing: Council Referral: Hot Tub Ordinance Amendments
 - Public Hearing: ADU Ordinance Amendments

b. Upcoming City Council Meeting Items:

- **September 29, 2026:**
 - San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan
 - Planning Commission FY 2026-27 Work Plan

9. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion/Second (Merker/Two) to approve the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from the July 1, 2026.

Ayes: Hauser, Merker, Oatfield, Two, Owens, Bechtolsheim, Allen. Noes: None. Abstain: Wang, Ruth. Absent: None (7-0-2-0). Motion passed.

10. ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Public Hearing: Ashby BART West Lot Objective Design Standards

From: Alisa Shen, Principal Planner

Principal Planner Alisa Shen presented an overview of the draft Objective Design Standards (ODS), including the ODS development timeline, site context, policy framework, technical constraints, a summary of the changes from the preliminary ODS to the draft ODS, responses to a letter from the developer, and provided a draft resolution recommending that the City Council adopt the draft ODS for the Ashby BART West Lot Transit Oriented Development.

Commissioners took public comments, asked questions and made comments including but not limited to: proposed changes to sidewalk design standards, internal access drive standards, landscape maintenance responsibility, parking and access, ground floor retail locations and connections, building frontage length, potential impacts from proposed 2-way cycle-track, building setback and step-back standards, concerns regarding Ashby Flea Market, concerns regarding open space, permeable green space and play areas for children; parking, building heights, desire to delay the recommendation of the draft ODS, concerns regarding historic displacement and impacts from BART construction, concerns regarding construction impacts, concerns regarding building scale and size, concerns regarding density bonus development potential, traffic analysis, site constraints impacting project, concerns regarding filling commercial spaces, pedestrian experience and safety along MLK Jr & Ashby, timeline relative to approved City and BART Exchange Agreement requirements and deadlines, phasing of project and public amenities, potential closure of Adeline Street on weekends for the flea market, and acoustic standards for windows of residential development to minimize conflict with weekend drum circle.

Motion/Second (Oatfield/Merker) to adopt a resolution recommending that the City Council adopt the draft Objective Design Standards (ODS) for the Ashby BART West Lot Transit Oriented Development with the following modifications:

- Form a subcommittee with Commissioners Merker, Wang and Twu to further review the draft ODS and determine whether to recommend to the City Council any additional modifications to the West Lot ODS that fall within the legally permissible scope of objective design standards.

Ayes: Hauser, Merker, Oatfield, Twu, Owens, Bechtolsheim, Allen, Wang, Ruth. Abstain: None. Absent: None (9-0-0-0). Motion passed.

Public Comments: 30

11. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Status of General Plan Updates: Safety and Environmental Justice Elements

From: Alene Pearson, Planning and Development Deputy Director

Deputy Director Alene Pearson presented a status update regarding the update of the General Plan's Safety Element and the drafting process of a new Environmental Justice Element. The presentation also outlined next steps in the drafting process.

12. CORRESPONDENCE

13. NEXT COMMISSION MEETING:

- Wednesday October 7, 2026

14. ADJOURN

Motion/Second (Oatfield/Twu) to adjourn the meeting at 10:14 pm.

Ayes: Hauser, Merker, Oatfield, Twu, Owens, Bechtolsheim, Allen, Wang, Ruth. Noes: None. Abstain: None. Absent: None (9-0-0-0). Motion passed.

Members of the public in attendance: 46 in person, 16 on Zoom

Public Speakers: 35 (28 in person, 7 online)

Length of the meeting: 3 hours 39 min



Justin Horner, Planning Commission Secretary