

Public Opinion in Planning: Alternative Land Uses for the Harrison Street Tract

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Introduction

Within the history of difficult relations between the University of California at Berkeley and the surrounding community, the discord has been most acute whenever the University undertook new developments, such as the expansion of campus south of Sather Gate, the construction of the southside highrise dorm units, the acquisition of People's Park and Clark Kerr campus, and now the Long Range Development Plan. The root of this tension as perceived by the community is a consistent lack of community input and control in the decision-making process. In response, my research tries to bridge the gap between one particular community that will be affected by University development and the Campus Planning Office.

Albany Village (often referred to as University Village) lies along the Berkeley-Albany border, just west of San Pablo Avenue (Figure 1). The parcel of about 100 acres is owned by the University of California and used primarily for married student housing. The Campus Planning Office has decided to renovate the old buildings, which were constructed for low-income housing during World War II. On the south-west corner of Albany Village lies the Harrison Street tract, a twelve-acre parcel of land bordered by Harrison Street to the south, 5th Street to the east, Albany Village housing to the north, and Southern Pacific Railroad tracks to the west (Figure 2). This site is currently open space with an uncovered section of Codornices Creek running through the middle from east to west. A building which houses the Berkeley-Oakland Support Services (B.O.S.S.) homeless shelter and a large industrial warehouse are both located along Harrison Street. The warehouse is subdivided into workshops which are rented from the University by skilled mechanics, welders, and artists, as well as the Associated Students of the University of California (A.S.U.C.) Recycling Project. North of the warehouse there is a sculpture garden which contains many unique industrial sculptures that have been created by local artists out of discarded materials. Other than an assortment of large vehicles and other pieces of industrial equipment which are stored between the sculpture garden and the warehouse, this land is currently undeveloped.

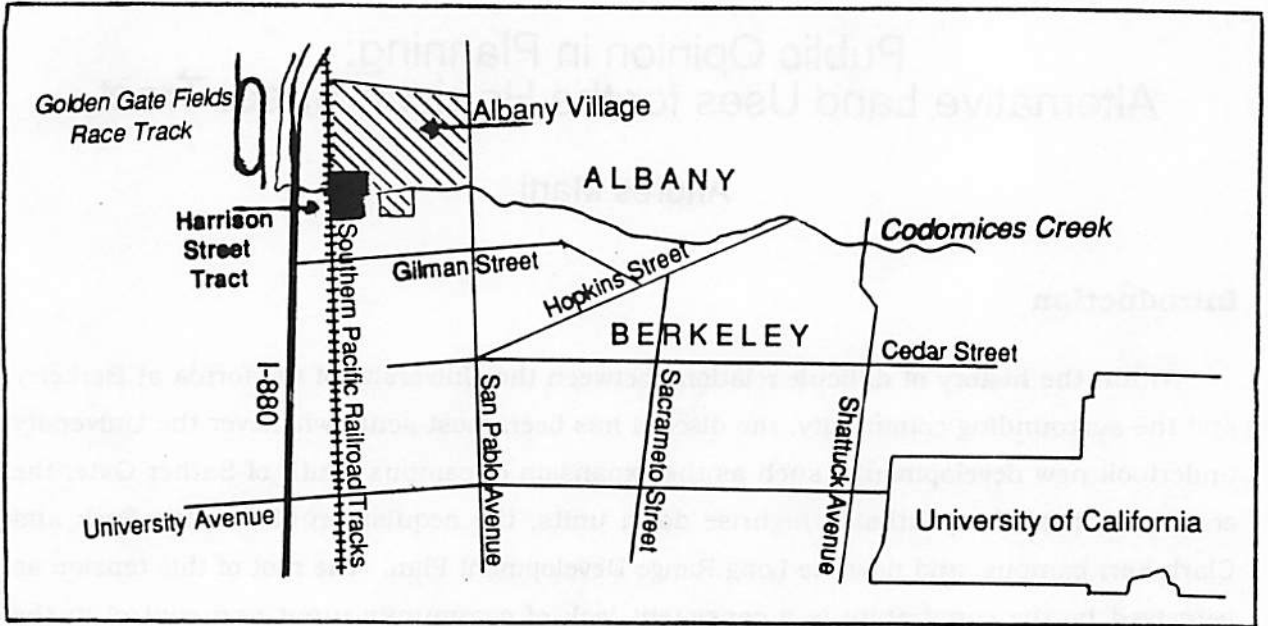


Figure 1. Map of Northwest Berkeley.

According to Jacqueline Bernier (1989, pers. comm.), Senior Planner of the Campus Planning Office, the redevelopment of Albany Village will be planned by two committees that are currently being created. The Albany Village Work Group, which will guide the overall planning and be the decision-making group, will be entirely composed of University administrators from different planning and financing offices, both from the Berkeley campus and systemwide. The Albany Village Program committee, which will make recommendations on housing, community facilities, and parking to the Work Group, will include representatives from various campus offices, Albany Village managers, and students who reside in the married student housing. While the focus of these committees will be the renovation or replacement of Albany Village housing, the geographical scope of the committees will include the Harrison Street tract, which is projected to be developed as a combination of retail stores and married student housing. In addition, the University is currently negotiating with the city of Berkeley over relocating the homeless shelter from the tract to University-owned land at San Pablo and Ashby (Joe, 1989).

The people who will be most directly affected by the development of the Harrison Street tract, however, are not represented on either committee. They include everyone who resides or works along the periphery of the tract, including local business owners and employees, waste management industry managers and workers, the present tenants of the 5th and

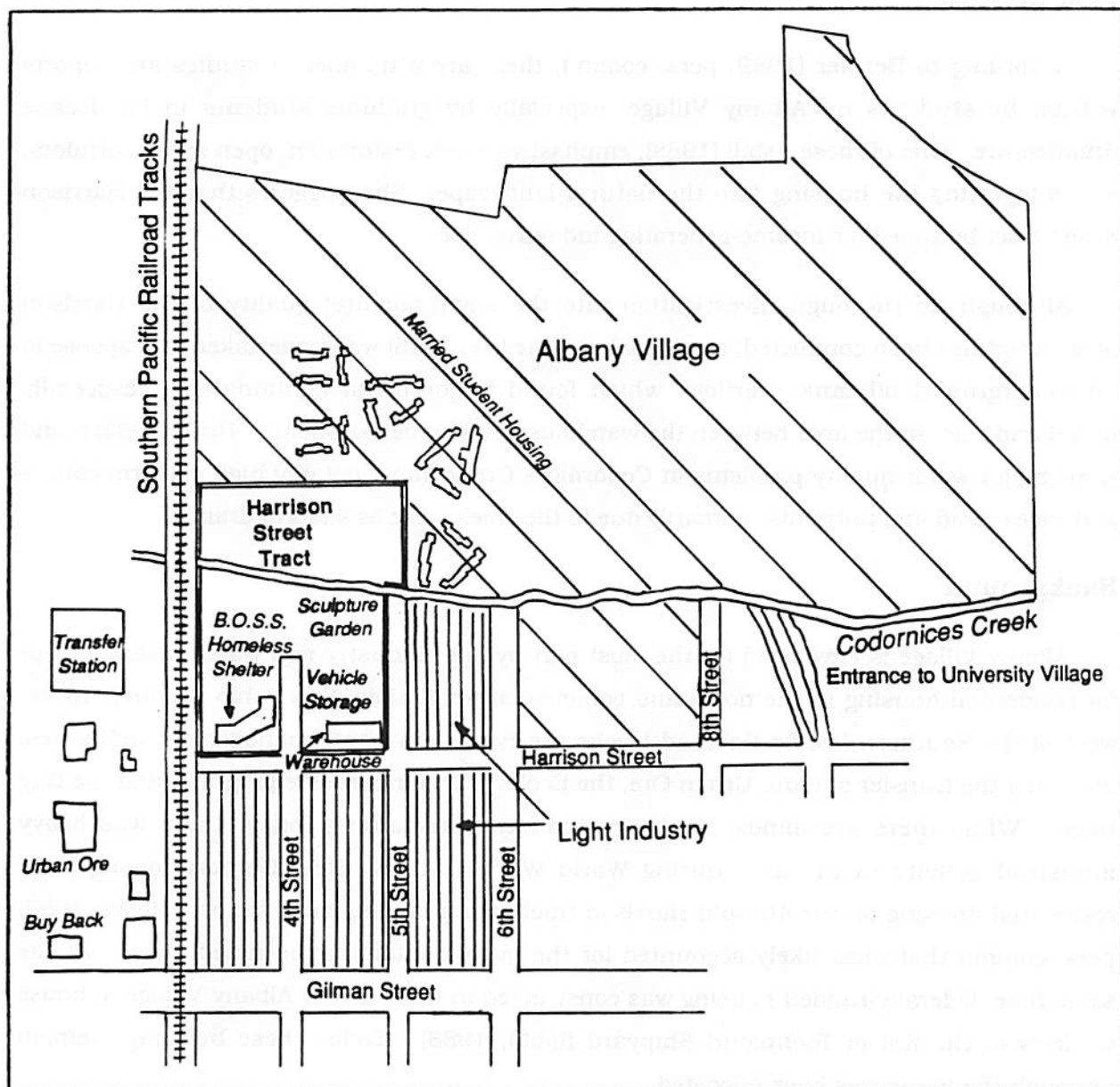


Figure 2. Map of Harrison Street Tract and surrounding area.

Harrison Street warehouse, and the homeless shelter operators and the homeless people who use the shelter. To help provide a voice in the planning process for these groups, I prepared a survey and interviewed people about which land uses the surrounding community would consider appropriate and beneficial. Through tabulation and analysis of these interviews, this report provides the Albany Village Work Group and Program Committee with a measure of public opinion about possible land uses for the Harrison Street tract.

Past Studies

According to Bernier (1989, pers. comm.), there are a number of studies and reports written by students on Albany Village, especially by graduate students in Landscape Architecture. One of these, Isbill (1988), emphasizes creek restoration, open space corridors, and integrating the housing into the natural landscape. She suggests that the Harrison Street tract be zoned for income-generating industrial use.

Although no thorough investigation into the environmental quality of the Harrison Street tract has been conducted, a soil analysis (Stedjee, 1985) was undertaken in response to an underground oil tank overflow, which found major metal contaminants, especially nickel and zinc, in the area between the warehouse and homeless shelter. Ruth (1983) found some major water quality problems in Codornices Creek, most notably high coliform counts and excess lead and nutrients, primarily due to the creek's use as a storm drain.

Background

Albany Village is enveloped for the most part by light industry and warehousing, except for residential housing to the north and commercial retail along San Pablo Avenue. To the west of the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks are Berkeley's waste management industries, including the transfer station, Urban Ore, the Ecology Center curbside program, and the Buy Back. While there are almost no heavy industries remaining today, there was heavy industrial activity in the area during World War II. U. S. Steel Corporation replaced residential housing on the 4th and Harrison tract with a landing craft factory (Moser, 1988, pers. comm.) that most likely accounted for the metal contamination noted above. At the same time, federally-funded housing was constructed in what is now Albany Village to house workers of the Kaiser Richmond Shipyard (Isbill, 1988). Today these buildings remain although the industries have relocated.

Codornices and Village creeks, both of which run through Albany Village, were once important to local indigenous people, providing fresh water and a lush habitat. Unlike most creeks in Berkeley, Codornices Creek has not been completely channelized and covered in culverts. In fact, most of the stretch from the Berkeley Hills to San Pablo Avenue runs through private yards in a relatively unaltered state. Then the creek flows through a culvert under San Pablo, and alternates between open channel and covered culvert until 6th Street, from which point the creek stretches, often stagnant, in an open channel to the railroad tracks. Gravel and silt carried during storm flows are deposited where the creek flows under

the tracks, obstructing the flow of the stream during dry periods. For many decades both Codornices and Village creeks have been used to carry street runoff to the bay. The Codornices Creek Association is a community organization which has been advocating and organizing for the restoration of Codornices Creek. Bill Moser, who manages the Harrison Street tract, has been meeting with the Codornices Creek Association, which may be an indication that the University has an interest in restoring the creek.

The planning process for Albany Village redevelopment began recently with a draft of a work program written by Bernier. She is now recruiting members to serve on the two committees. The Work Group, which is the equivalent of a Campus Building Committee, will be in charge of all negotiating, financing, and lease agreements. Its membership will consist of both campus and statewide administrators from Auxiliary Services, Campus Planning Office, Design and Construction Services, Housing Office, Peripheral and Outlying Properties Committee, the Treasurer's Office, General Counsel, and the President's Office. The Program Committee will be responsible for drafting a detailed program for the redevelopment, addressing details from the design of countertops to room sizes to types of housing and style of the community center. Its membership will include representatives from the Departments of Housing and Transportation, Campus Planning Office, Albany Village managers, three faculty members, and six students, five to be residents of Albany Village.

The Work Group will first set project goals and later develop a project planning guide based on the Program Committee's recommendations. After the Regents approve one of the development options, the Work Group will hire a project manager, and the project will become the responsibility of Design and Construction Services, where the architectural plans will be developed. Once the plan is finished, a consultant will be hired to conduct an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). When the Regents give final approval for the plan and EIR, Design and Construction Services and the project manager will produce working drawings and begin the renovation (Bernier, 1988, pers. comm.).

Methodology

Between January 29 and February 20, 1989, I conducted 38 personal interviews of people who were affiliated with an organization (either residential or business) in the immediate proximity of the Harrison Street tract. The interviews were conducted by going door to door. The survey form I used for my interviews is divided into four parts.

The first section identifies the person being interviewed as belonging to one of the following nine groups:

- (1) Albany Village residents;
- (2) Albany Village administrators;
- (3) local business owners;
- (4) local business workers;
- (5) waste management industry managers;
- (6) waste management industry workers;
- (7) 4th and Harrison Street tenants;
- (8) homeless shelter administrators; and
- (9) homeless people.

At least three people from each group were interviewed.

The second section of the survey asks whether the person being interviewed supports or opposes (or doesn't have an opinion about) several potential land uses for the Harrison Street tract, and what she or he foresees as the benefits and problems of each land use. I identified the following seven potential land uses:

- (1) additional married student housing;
- (2) service-oriented commercial development (e.g. cafes, small shops, restaurants);
- (3) light industrial use (e.g. product assembly, warehousing, repair shops);
- (4) woodchipping and/or compost facility;
- (5) public park (e.g. playground, ball field, open space, vegetation);
- (6) community garden (operated by the homeless shelter and/or Albany Village); and
- (7) no development.

In addition, I asked if there were any other preferable land uses.

In the third section I asked whether the person being interviewed supports the restoration of Codornices Creek, whether she or he thinks the homeless shelter should be relocated, and whether she or he would favor a woodchipping and/or compost facility if the University opted for industrial land use. Finally, I asked for any additional comments.

Data

All of the quantitative data are tabulated into Tables 1 and 2. Qualitative data such as the perceived benefits and problems of the different land uses are presented in the text of this section. Table 1 gives the response distribution within each group of interviewees listed in the first column. The second column lists the number of people in each group. The group

sizes are very roughly in proportion to their respective population sizes, with Albany Village residents somewhat overrepresented. Of the three numbers appearing in each of the remaining columns, the first is the number of yes/support responses, the second of no/oppose responses, and the third of don't know/no opinion responses. The last row gives the aggregate response of all 38 people interviewed.

Of the seven land uses in the survey, support is greatest for a community garden (30 people), a park (29 people), housing (27 people), and a woodchipping and/or compost facility (25 people). Opposition is greatest against doing nothing (22 people), commercial use (21 people), and industrial use (19 people). Thirty-three people supported restoring the creek; 15 people felt the homeless shelter should be relocated (for various reasons); and 19 people favored a woodchipping and/or compost facility over other industrial uses.

Table 2 lists the percentage within each group that support a particular land use or a proposition in section III of the survey. The total percent responding "support" or "yes" is calculated in two ways. The row labeled "All People Interviewed" is simply the total number of people answering "support" or "yes" divided by 38. The row labeled "Weighted Average" corrects for the variation in group size by giving each group equal value. This is calculated by summing together the percentage "support" or "yes" from each group and dividing by 9. The standard deviation, which is a measure of the degree to which the data differ from the mean, is calculated from Table 2 response percentages by the following equation:

$$\text{Standard Deviation} = s = \frac{\sum(x-\mu)^2}{n-1}$$

where: μ = weighted average (mean)
 x = response percentage of each group
 n = number of groups (in this case, 9)

For my data, the standard deviation provides a measure of the discrepancy between groups; the more groups disagree on a particular land use, the greater the standard deviation.

Overall, the most popular land uses for the Harrison Street tract are (based on weighted average): community garden (79%), public park (77%), a woodchipping and/or compost facility (69%), and married student housing (67%). Neither service-oriented commercial development (43%) nor light industrial use (44%) have majority support. Most of the people interviewed stated that the land should somehow be developed, although some (26%) thought that in the context of Berkeley, this remaining open space and rare meadow-like habitat should be preserved as it is. Eighty-six percent favored restoring the creek; 39 percent felt the

Group	***	II. (1) Housing	II. (2) Service	II. (3) Industry	II. (4) Compost	II. (5) Park	II. (6) Garden	II. (7) Nothing	III. (1) Creek?	III. (2) Shelter?	III. (3) Compost?
Waste Management Managers	3	1-0-2	1-2-0	1-0-2	3-0-0	2-1-0	2-0-1	0-2-1	3-0-0	1-2-0	2-0-1
Waste Management Workers	5	4-0-1	1-3-1	2-3-0	3-1-1	3-2-0	4-1-0	2-2-1	5-0-0	4-0-1	3-1-1
Local Business Owners	3	2-1-0	1-2-0	2-1-0	2-1-0	2-0-1	2-0-1	2-0-1	1-1-1	1-2-0	1-1-1
Local Business Employees	4	1-0-3	4-0-0	3-1-0	2-2-0	4-0-0	3-0-1	1-2-1	3-0-1	2-1-1	3-1-0
Albany Village Administrators	3	2-1-0	2-1-0	0-3-0	3-0-0	2-0-1	2-0-1	1-2-0	3-0-0	2-0-1	2-0-1
Albany Village Residents	8	8-0-0	0-8-0	2-6-0	5-1-2	5-1-2	6-2-0	1-7-0	7-1-0	2-4-2	4-2-2
4th & Harrison Street Tenants	5	3-1-1	1-2-2	3-2-0	3-1-1	5-0-0	4-1-0	3-0-2	4-1-0	2-2-1	1-2-2
Homeless Shelter Operators	3	3-0-0	2-1-0	3-0-0	2-0-1	2-1-0	3-0-0	0-3-0	3-0-0	0-3-0	2-1-0
Homeless People	4	3-1-0	2-2-0	0-3-1	2-1-1	4-0-0	4-0-0	0-4-0	4-0-0	1-3-0	1-2-1
All People Interviewed	38	27-4-7	14-21-3	16-19-3	25-7-6	29-5-4	30-4-4	10-22-6	33-3-2	15-17-6	19-10-9

Table 1. Response Distribution by Group
 Note. *** Number of people interviewed in group

Group	***	II. (1) Housing	II. (2) Service	II. (3) Industry	II. (4) Compost	II. (5) Park	II. (6) Garden	II. (7) Nothing	III. (1) Restore C	III. (2) Move She	III. (3) Prefer Cor
Waste Management Managers	3	33%	33%	33%	100%	67%	67%	0%	100%	33%	67%
Waste Management Workers	5	80%	20%	40%	60%	60%	80%	40%	100%	80%	60%
Local Business Owners	3	67%	33%	67%	67%	67%	67%	67%	33%	33%	33%
Local Business Employees	4	25%	100%	75%	50%	100%	75%	25%	75%	50%	75%
Albany Village Administrators	3	67%	67%	0%	100%	67%	67%	33%	100%	67%	67%
Albany Village Residents	8	100%	0%	25%	63%	63%	75%	12%	88%	25%	50%
4th & Harrison Street Tenants	5	60%	20%	60%	60%	100%	80%	60%	80%	40%	20%
Homeless Shelter Operators	3	100%	67%	100%	67%	67%	100%	0%	100%	0%	67%
Homeless People	4	75%	50%	0%	50%	100%	100%	0%	100%	25%	25%
All People Interviewed	38	71%	37%	42%	66%	76%	79%	26%	89%	39%	50%
Weighted Average		67%	43%	44%	69%	77%	79%	26%	86%	39%	52%
Standard Deviation		26%	27%	34%	19%	18%	13%	26%	22%	24%	26%

Table 2. Percent Responding "Support" or "Yes" by Group
 Note. *** Number of people interviewed in group

homeless shelter should be moved; and 52 percent favored a woodchipping and/or compost facility over other industrial uses. The standard deviation is normally in the range of 22 to 27 percent, with a greater discrepancy between groups for industrial land use (34%), and greater agreement for a community garden (13%), a park (18%), and a woodchipping and/or compost facility (19%).

There was very little opposition or discrepancy between groups to public park (77%, $s=19\%$) and community garden (79%, $s=13\%$) uses, and some suggested an integration of these uses. Furthermore, there was overwhelming support (86%, $s=22\%$) for the clean-up and restoration of Codornices Creek. The perceived benefits expressed for both public park and community garden uses are the preservation of open space, a place for people to eat lunch or relax, a place for children, and improving the environmental health of the area. The garden would provide the additional benefit of locally-grown vegetables, and a couple of people interviewed considered this a way to increase the self-sufficiency of those who used the garden. However, some potential problems expressed by respondents include soil contamination, administration of the community garden, and policing of the park.

A woodchipping and/or compost facility was also fairly popular (69%, $s=19\%$), with the least amount of support coming from local business workers, and the most from waste management industry managers (including the Refuse Superintendent who is currently involved in the siting of such a facility), Albany Village administrators, and the homeless shelter operators. The benefits of such a facility generally expressed were the recycling of materials, the diversion of yard trimmings and used lumber from the landfill, employment, and non-conflict with current land uses in the proximity. The potential problems some cited with such a facility were odor, flies, increased truck traffic, and doubts that such an operation could be successful. According to Moser (1988, pers. comm.), the University is currently negotiating with Recycled Wood Products over leasing part of the tract for a woodchipping and compost facility. About half (52%) of the people interviewed stated that they would prefer such a facility over other industries if the University opted for income-generating industrial use of the Harrison Street tract.

Housing is slightly less popular (67%, $s=26\%$). While people expressed the obvious benefit of additional housing, some felt that housing is less desirable than open space, and that the roads associated with housing would harm the environmental health of the Harrison Street tract. Others, however, considered housing a greater priority than open space. Another potential problem that some respondents expressed is conflict between the student residents and the homeless who are currently separated by the open space.

Generally, a majority of people interviewed said that commercial and industrial uses would not benefit the area because of increased traffic and parking problems, and because no such need exists. However, the discrepancy between groups is very large on these issues. Local business workers expressed their support for a place to eat during their lunch break, while other people felt that commercial development was not necessary or profitable in this area. Two benefits of industrial development, according to interviewees, are employment (although none of the homeless people favored industrial development), and non-conflict with current land uses in the proximity. The homeless shelter operators in particular felt industries are more tolerant and have more compatible operating hours than residential neighbors.

The most controversial issue is whether the homeless shelter should be relocated. Currently there are plans to relocate the shelter to another University-owned industrial site near Ashby and San Pablo. There was virtually unanimous agreement that the shelter should not be closed; the issue was rather should the shelter be relocated. While 39 percent of those interviewed stated that it should be moved, about half of them felt that it should be moved only to make it more centrally located. A homeless woman complained of the isolation of the current location and the lack of public transportation access (the nearest bus stop is on San Pablo) which makes it dangerous for women to reach the shelter. Only 21 percent of the people interviewed felt that the shelter should be moved because they considered their personal security or property to be threatened. Many people expressed doubt that an equivalent or better location could be found, and even if one could be, they predicted that the new neighbors would oppose the relocation.

Finally, the most common comment I received that is unrelated to my listed land-use alternatives was that 4th, 5th, and Harrison Streets desperately need to be resurfaced. Potholes are abundant.

Discussion

It is important to evaluate the validity of data whenever statistics are used. All of the numbers I have presented provide approximate opinion distributions because the number of people interviewed within a group is rather small. In the text, the weighted average is used rather than the total percentage so that each of the nine groups is given equal value. Also, the yes/no format of the survey usually allowed people to respond unambiguously, except for the

question about whether the homeless shelter should be relocated (because people responded "yes" for two distinctly different reasons).

My overall impression of the data is that there is a clear priority in the community for preserving open space and environmental quality on the Harrison Street tract. The 86 percent support for restoring Codornices Creek, the strong preference for a community garden and public park, and the opposition to industrial and commercial development should be considered by the Albany Village committees as a desire by the community for an ecologically oriented development. Since the Harrison Street tract is large enough to accommodate multiple uses, there appears to be the possibility of an aesthetically and practically appealing integration of a community garden, public park, and the restoration of Codornices Creek. Due to the contamination of the local soil, a community garden would require raised garden beds with imported soil. Furthermore, restoration of the creek does not conflict with any other potential land uses and would in effect create a park within the flood plain corridor encompassing the creek, where building construction is restricted.

In addition to the park and garden uses, either a woodchipping or compost facility could be included on the tract. Alternatively, additional student housing could be integrated with garden and park uses. However, there is an incompatibility between housing and a woodchipping or compost facility. While these two land uses are about equally popular, there is more discrepancy between groups concerning the expansion of housing.

A compost facility would provide the added benefit of creating soil which could be used for the garden and park, Albany Village, or even the central campus. A woodchipping facility, alternatively, would decrease the potential risk of sanitary problems associated with the biological decay in compost. Either use would assist the city of Berkeley, which is searching for just such a site and operation. The Harrison Street tract is ideally located because of its proximity to the transfer station. About two-thirds of those interviewed supported a woodchipping or compost facility, which lends support to the planned lease to Recycled Wood Products. However, when asked if they would favor such a facility over other industrial uses, just over half the interviewees responded "yes." This suggests that a woodchipping or compost facility are not considered "industrial" by the local community.

Other industrial or service-oriented commercial development would create community discontent, although a single restaurant or coffee shop might prove to be popular with local workers. Nonetheless, such endeavors would probably be unprofitable due to a lack of

demand. Current business owners and employees identified the resurfacing of the damaged streets around the Harrison Street tract as a more pressing need.

Although the University is planning to relocate the homeless shelter to an equally remote and industrial property near San Pablo and Ashby and to expand the services of the new shelter, my research indicates that the shelter's current neighbors are generally undisturbed by the current location of the homeless shelter. This location is relatively favorable because of its isolation from residential areas and the compatibility of its operating hours with those of local businesses. The shelter is open only during the evening when local businesses are closed. B.O.S.S. has spent years rehabilitating and expanding the homeless shelter and has even allowed student volunteers to create raised garden beds. Also, the atmosphere created by the surrounding open space is, in my estimation, beneficial to the homeless.

Conclusion

Those involved in the decision-making of the Albany Village redevelopment, including the Albany Village Program Committee and Work Group, Campus Planning Office, project manager, and the Regents, should begin to incorporate more community input into the project planning than they have in the past. Interviews of residents and tenants and analysis of their views should be standard practice in any development planning process. Furthermore, student input should not be restricted to a purely advisory body (i.e. the Program Committee). The University decision-makers should learn to incorporate the priorities and inputs of everyone who will be affected by their decisions. In particular, I strongly urge the Albany Village Work Group and Program Committee to incorporate the community priorities expressed in this report into the project planning guide for the Harrison Street tract. As one interviewee noted, he didn't necessarily oppose University development, but felt that the University should work with the surrounding community for once, and not against it.

It is essential that any current uses and tenants should be given priority over new ones. Many individuals have paid rent and worked for years at the 4th and Harrison Street warehouse, helping create an appealing and practical environment out of an industrial leftover. Also, the A.S.U.C. Recycling Project uses part of this space for the storage of all recyclable materials from all University-affiliated buildings. Similarly, B.O.S.S. has taken an abandoned building and created a functioning shelter. Rather than create additional problems by angering new neighborhoods, city officials, and homeless people, the homeless

shelter should remain where it is, and perhaps even be expanded to include the services that are planned to be included in the new relocated shelter. To preserve the shelter, the warehouse, and the sculpture garden just north of the warehouse, the rectangle bordered by 4th Street to the west, Harrison Street to the south, 5th Street to the east, and Codornices Creek to the north should remain unchanged.

With the rest of the Harrison Street tract, a larger portion, I recommend that the University develop a public park and community garden, and restore Codornices Creek. Such a development would create a good faith relationship between the University and the community, as well as improve the environmental health of the formerly industrial area. The community garden could be operated by either Albany Village, B.O.S.S., or both.

However, if the Campus Planning Office feels strongly about using the Harrison Street tract to generate income by leasing property to an industrial business, then I recommend integrating a woodchipping or compost facility with the park and garden uses. This would minimize community discontent, assist the city of Berkeley, and add to the environmental health of the area. Such a facility would be best located between 4th Street and the railroad tracks, north of the homeless shelter, with the park and garden to the north of the creek (Figure 2). This layout would preserve easy access to the facility by 4th Street, allow for the restoration of the creek, and locate the park away from the streets.

Finally, if the Albany Village Work Group decides to build additional housing as projected, which I do not recommend, then the housing should be integrated into park and garden uses. Such development should occur only to the north of Codornices Creek, with the community garden and park located west of 4th Street (Figure 2). This layout would allow for the restoration of the creek, which would then serve as a border between the student housing and the park and garden. Industrial and commercial development are highly inadvisable, except for street repair and perhaps one small restaurant or coffee shop.

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