

Claremont Elmwood Neighborhood Association  
CENA  
P.O. Box 5108  
Berkeley, CA 94705

February 6, 2006

Honorable Mayor Bates and the Berkeley City Council

Ref: Landmarks Preservation Ordinance Revisions (Agenda Item #17)

Dear Mayor and City Council,

I am writing on behalf of The Claremont Elmwood Neighborhood Association (CENA). We are a neighborhood organization with 800 members that would like to go on record as a strong supporter of the existing Landmarks Preservation Ordinance.

It has come to our attention that you and the Council are revising the current Landmarks Preservation Ordinance. We are concerned that to this date there has been no proper opportunity for public comment other than a few minutes here and there at council meetings. With changes so major to a current ordinance it would appear necessary to have public input and a formal workshop – not something where it is part of the council meeting itself or a “pretend” workshop. Such major changes to the ordinance of a “certified” City will surely require compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act, particularly in view of the reduction of protection for historic resources.

We are very strongly concerned that the revisions as we understand them appear to limit, if not eliminate, chances for the public to research historic resources due to inadequate notification and/or time to carry out diligent research.

We do not want our neighborhood to be traumatized by the destruction of our architectural heritage and the construction of inadequate, inappropriate, and ill-designed buildings. Ours is a single-family residential neighborhood for the most part with some rental and commercial buildings. We appreciate the mix of residents and we appreciate the architectural character of our community.

We urge you to submit the revisions suggested by the Landmarks Preservation Commission for comment and acceptance and to enable the public to participate in the process. The LPC is the body that has the mission to look for the best protection of our heritage on behalf of all neighborhoods in Berkeley.

Lastly, we strongly urge you to consider the future of the City as our descendants will know it. If we destroy that which has been handed down to us, we will be giving them a City poorer in character and poorer by virtue of the fact that no visitor will spend more than a few hours in an ugly place. Residents will simply move away.

Sincerely,

Dean Metzger  
President