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Newsletter Number 19

WHEN IT'S GONE IT'S GONE

Housing policy is taking a
wrecking ball to places we love

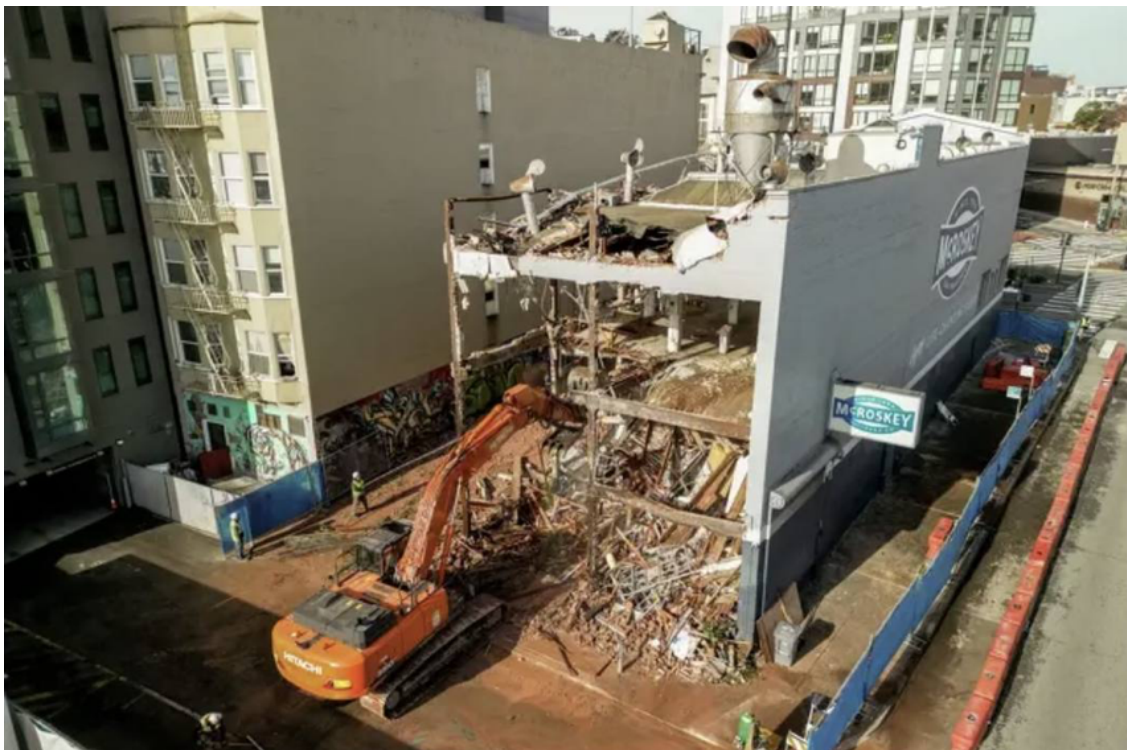
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Affordability, Safety, Environmental Quality, and Local Accountability

IN THE FIELD

Places we love are getting boarded up or demolished

Who decides the value of our past?



[101 year old McRoskey building in SF](#) · PHOTO BY Stephen Lam/S.F. Chronicle · [article](#)

In this case the building was demolished for an affordable housing project. It's an outlier.

SPECIAL GUEST

How Preservation Became the Villain

After decades of success stories, a proven planning tool is disparaged.



North Beach, San Francisco. Courtesy of Bridget Maley.

Bridget Maley knows: you can't un-wreck your city.

Historic preservation has long helped communities protect distinctive places, celebrate history and culture, and support local economies. So why is it increasingly being treated as an obstacle?

Join architectural historian, community advocate and historic

preservation practitioner **Bridget Maley** as she explains how preservation works at the local, state and federal levels and explores current debates over adaptive reuse, historic districts and landmarking.

Maley brings decades of expertise in architectural history, planning and preservation to projects throughout the West, including the Conservatory of Flowers in Golden Gate Park, the Historic Downtown Los Angeles Design Guidelines, and projects in the Presidio of San Francisco.



Downtown Sausalito. Courtesy of Bridget Maley.

TAKEAWAYS FROM LAST MONDAY

Two Communities, Two Very Different Challenges

A Community Challenges Builder's Remedy

Mike Peterson, president of Neighborhood Voices of Silver Spur,

presented his community's efforts to challenge the builder's remedy project in RPV. The project is described in detail in a blog post [here](#).

Peterson's is an inspiring example of community organizing. Engagement quickly grew from 50 neighbors to 200, motivated to act. The group adopted a highly visible strategy of wearing branded, red T-shirts to demonstrate community opposition; the sea of red could not be ignored in City Council and Planning Commission chambers.

Neighborhood Voices of Silver Spur is currently exploring a number of legal arguments.

The city has denied the builders remedy application, and litigation is now underway, with a trial expected in February 2027.

The Compliance Timetable

The key question: was the city compliant when it adopted the required changes, or only when HCD confirmed them? The City says the Builder's Remedy window had closed; the developer disagrees. In RPV's case, HCD took 56 days to turn the approved paperwork around.

This system gives HCD the ability to withhold paperwork that is compliant, leaving cities vulnerable.

And is the consequence proportional? Should even a temporary lapse give a developer the right to impose a highly impactful project on a community — as a punishment — with consequence that last forever, regardless of how quickly the city fixes the underlying paperwork?

Berkeley: Debate Over the Hopkins Street Cycle Track

Donna DeDiemar described the years-long debate over Berkeley's Hopkins

Street project, where the City has approved protected bicycle infrastructure along a constrained neighborhood corridor.

Residents have raised concerns about emergency access, parking loss, impacts to local businesses, and accessibility for older and mobility-challenged residents. Their concern is not simply whether bike infrastructure belongs on Hopkins Street, but whether the final design adequately reflects the realities of that particular corridor.

The discussion also touched on SB 569 (Blakespear), which applies to bikeways built in whole or in part with State General Fund dollars. The bill would generally limit removal or modification of those facilities for up to 20 years or their documented useful life, without a stringent state approval process.

That raises a broader question: when state funding helps shape a local transportation project, how much flexibility should a city retain if conditions on the ground later warrant changes?

HOW WAKE UP WORKS

On the call, consultant Chris LeGras shared his long-standing research and organizing around similar transit issues. Many were familiar with his work, and his video on the topic can be seen [here](#). Chris suggested residents examine the city's work under state requirements for identifying and evaluating evacuation routes. He also offered to connect with the Hopkins Street group to share additional information and experience from other communities. This was a perfect example of the connections we can make when we work together.

STATEWIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION

Would it feel good to tell
an 11th District congressional voter
how Senator Wiener's work
has affected you?

In the Monday meeting we'll present a project to send handwritten postcards to targeted District 11 voters ahead of the election, to tell them how Senator Wiener's legislation is affecting your community, and others.

BIAS?

When press coverage distorts the bigger story

Subjective reporting and selective opinion pieces — several projects on our radar were featured — dismissively — in various press this week.

Menlo Park: The Former Sunset Campus

THEIR HEADLINE — S.F. STANDARD, OPINION

“This Silicon Valley campus was a paradise. Bulldoze it”

The most egregious example of bias, as usual, came from the S.F. Standard, with a lengthy opinion piece arguing for the builder's remedy skyscraper project at the former Sunset magazine headquarters.

“Magazines aren't museums,” the author writes. True. But a recognized California historical resource is not a magazine.

Towers of 85% luxury housing and amenities, plus massive commercial space

and hotel rooms, don't add to the housing stock or solve our affordability crisis.

[Read “This Silicon Valley campus was a paradise. Bulldoze it”](#)

Oakland: The Trader Joe's Turned Towers

THEIR HEADLINE — BLOOMBERG

“Senior housing faces opposition from seniors themselves”

Bloomberg's “article” blows past comments by activist Myra Walton, herself a senior resident of the area, that the scale — not the concept — is wrong. Her motivations are questioned, and her comments are followed directly by SPUR and YIMBY heavy hitters, both dismissive of issues raised.

[Read “Senior housing faces opposition from seniors themselves”](#)

San Francisco: The Marina Safeway Project

THEIR HEADLINE — SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

“Marina Safeway tower approved”

In the largely technical article, principal developer Dave Balducci assumes public support, and defended his huge, almost entirely market-rate behemoth by claiming most District 2 residents back it — on the theory that affordability starts with building more homes. The project, he said, gives “families and future generations the opportunity to live in the city they love.”

This is not family housing. It's not affordable.

At the end, Lori Brooke, founder of Neighborhoods United SF, countered with the relevant details: the Marina Safeway is exposing the gray areas and unintended consequences of Sacramento's experiment with housing streamlining, and where public health and safety are involved, speed should not come at the expense of getting it right.

[Read “Marina Safeway tower approved”](#)

WAKE UP ZOOM

Monday, August 24 · 5:00 PM

*Bridget Maley — architectural historian
and historic preservation practitioner*

REGISTER FOR THE ZOOM

Already registered once? Look for the confirmation link Zoom emailed you —
you can reuse that same link every time. No need to register again.

SAVE THE DATES

Monday, August 24

Historic Preservationist Bridget Maley

Monday, August 31 and Monday, September 7

ON BREAK

Why WAKE UP now?

Most people learn about state housing laws when the bulldozers show up. WAKE UP CA helps you understand the laws, legislation and decisions earlier — while the plans are still being made, and you still have agency to influence them.

SUPPORT THE WORK

As we grow, so do our expenses.
Your donation directly impacts our ability
to continue to do this work.

DONATE TO WAKE UP

WAKE UP CALIFORNIA is a 501(c)(4) social welfare organization.
Contributions are not tax deductible as charitable contributions.

— Amy Kalish, President and Founder

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