From: WAKE UP CALIFORNIA amylkalish@249826007.mailchimpapp.com
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WAKE UP CALIFORNIA

Newsletter Number 20

BEVERLY HILLS BUILDERS REMEDY

What is this project fixing?

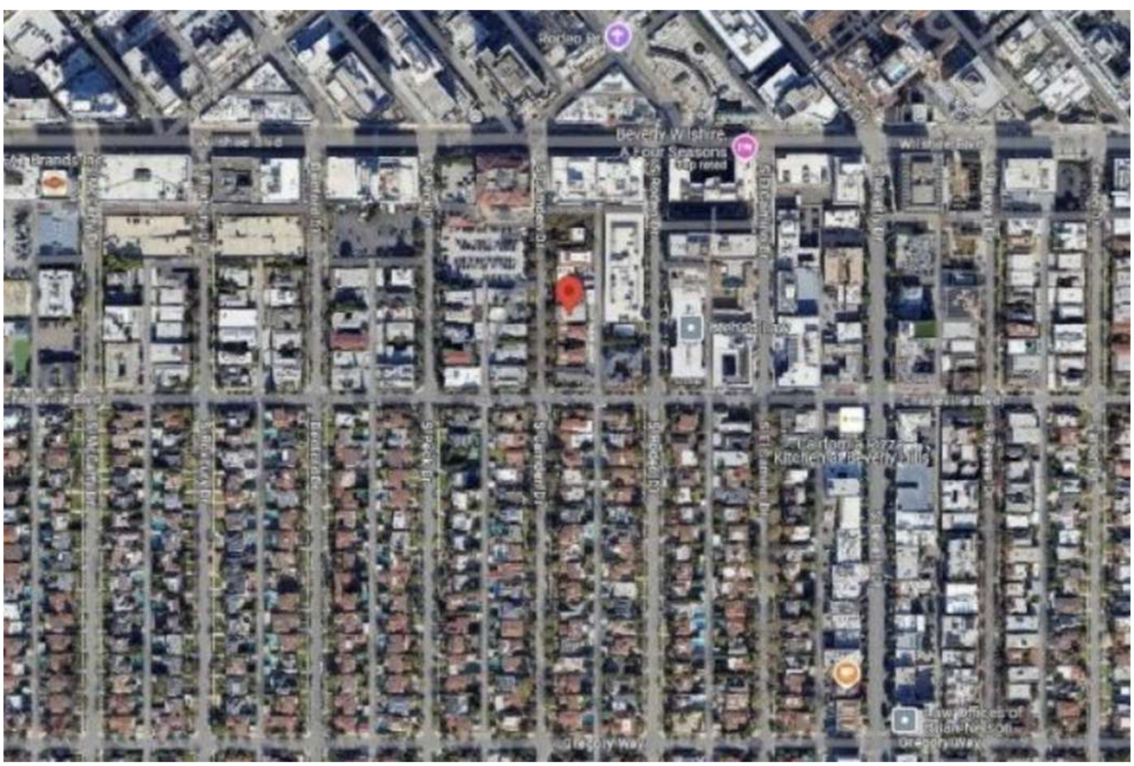
www.wakeca.org

Affordability, Safety, Environmental Quality, and Local Accountability

IN THE FIELD

Density Dropped Into a Dense Area

Rare naturally occurring affordable housing in Beverly Hills, replaced with a luxury tower.



140 S. Camden Drive · Google Maps, © 2026 Google.

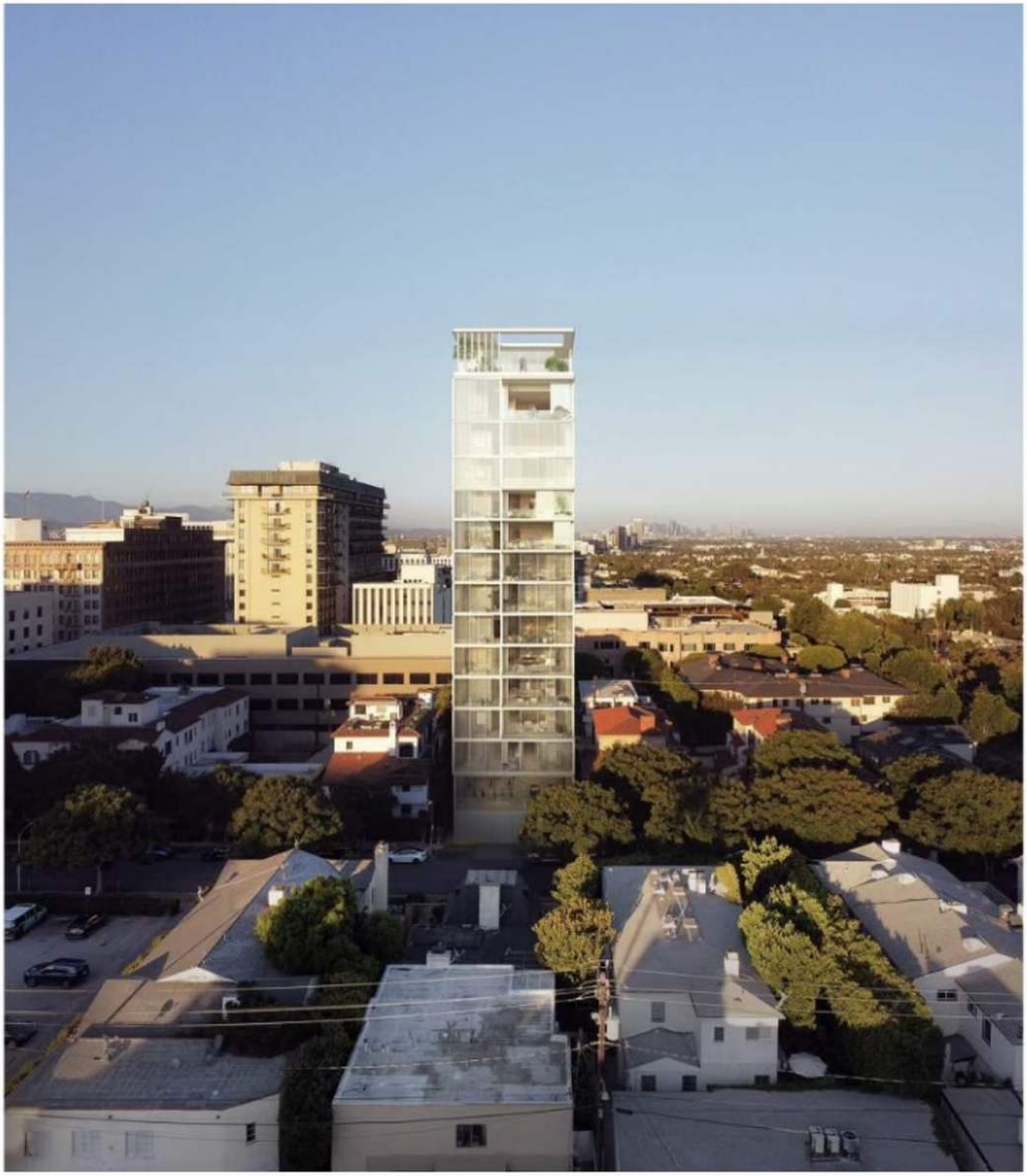
Six units count as affordable — but never as affordable as

the eight older units they replace, and subject to rent increases as AMI rises.

> *When low income starts at $93,300,*
> *it's hard not to be skeptical.*
>
> *2026 low-income limits in Los Angeles County: $93,300 for one person, $106,600 for two. The county's median income for a family of four is $108,100.*

The existing building is a 1931 two-story, 8-unit apartment building, about 7,052 sq. ft. The apartments are unusually large for older rentals — about 900 sq. ft., all one-bedroom units — with balconies, decorative fireplaces, wood-beamed ceilings and other period architectural details.

What makes the comparison so dramatic is what would replace those eight apartments.



Rendering courtesy of Wilshire Camden LLC.

The Beverly Hills Planning Commission approved the project on July 23, 2026, after the city reversed its earlier denial. The 15-story tower will rise roughly 194 feet and contain 27 units — 21 market-rate condominiums and six reserved as deed-restricted affordable housing. CARA Architecture is the designer.

The Affordable Housing Controversy

> **Existing structure.** The development requires the total demolition of a two-story, 8-unit apartment complex originally constructed in 1931.
>
> **The preservation critique.** Opponents highlight that the demolition completely destroys 8 units of "Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing" (NOAH) — older, unprotected multi-family stock that serves as the city's primary entry-level rental market.
>
> **The policy defense.** State housing policy favors the trade-off because NOAH units carry no legal price caps and can have market-rate rent hikes at any time. The project replaces them with six deed-restricted affordable units, guaranteeing legally mandated, low-income rents for decades.

Vulnerabilities of Deed-Restricted Units

Critics of the builder's remedy trade-off point out structural vulnerabilities inherent to deed-restricted housing compared to historical NOAH units.

> **Area Median Income volatility.** Maximum affordable rents are tied directly to Los Angeles County's AMI, which is updated annually by housing agencies (HUD/HCD).
>
> **Rent spikes.** When inflation or wage growth pushes county-wide income up, the AMI benchmarks rise with it — and the developer can legally raise rents on low-income tenants whose own wages have not moved at all.
>
> **Expiration timelines.** Unlike older character housing which remains naturally cheaper as it ages, deed restrictions carry a firm expiration date — typically lasting 55 years under California density bonus laws — after which the units can convert to full-market luxury rates.

TAKEAWAYS FROM LAST MONDAY

The Housing We Already Have Is Part of the Solution

North Beach, San Francisco. Courtesy of Bridget Maley.

> *Historic preservation is not the villain; it is a vital part of our culture, too valuable to dismiss as an excuse to avoid development.*

Bridget Maley's presentation to WAKE UP last Monday showed why preservation belongs in the housing conversation. Existing buildings and neighborhoods are themselves part of our housing supply, and decisions about redevelopment can affect affordable housing, historic resources and the character of communities.

Federal, state and local preservation protections have developed over decades, and how they are now colliding with a new generation of state housing laws built around ministerial approvals, streamlining and objective design standards.

Bridget stressed the inconsistencies. One of her most important points was how inconsistent those protections have become. Housing law definitions of "historic resources" vary; locally designated landmarks and property on the California or National Register are treated differently, and even the date of designation — under SB 79 — can affect whether an asset is protected.

BRIDGET'S ADVICE TO COMMUNITIES

"Designate, designate, designate."

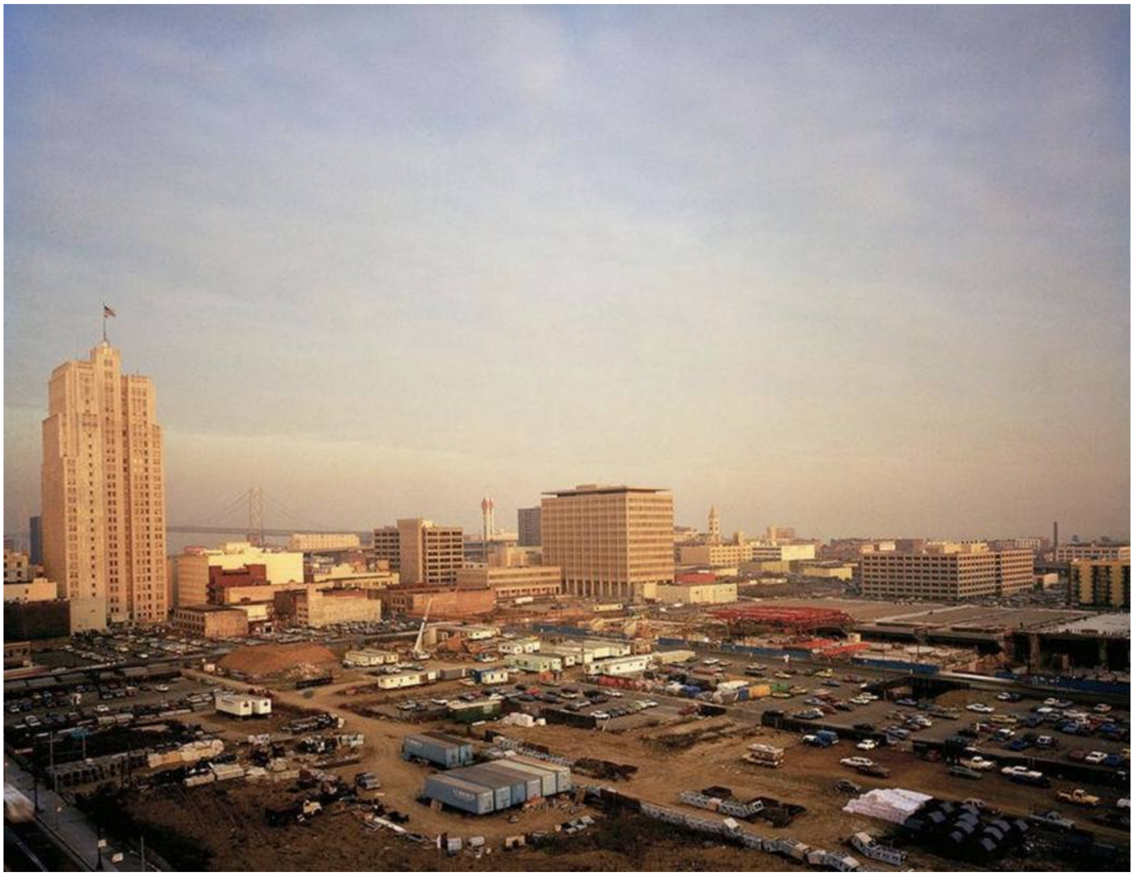
Her examples made the problem tangible. In San Francisco, Victorian homes in Cow Hollow that were never thought to be at risk, were never formally designated, are now upzoned for eight-story development.

The Lane Medical Library, a local landmark, faces major alterations under the Density Bonus Law because local landmarks are not protected in the same way as certain state and federal historic resources.

Bridget understood "Streamlining has some valid points, but we have to understand exactly what we're getting ourselves into." She noted that some built out communities need to grow, and larger structures might be necessary, but careful assessment and protection can limit losses to demolition.

Before: Howard Street near Fourth Street, San Francisco, c. 1940s — residential hotels, storefronts and small businesses, block after block. Source: San Francisco Pictures; original photographer/collection unidentified.

The Moscone/Yerba Buena redevelopment erased a substantial part of the older South of Market neighborhood. San Francisco Planning documentation says the redevelopment displaced roughly 4,000 residents and 700 businesses.



After: future site of Yerba Buena Gardens, 1976, following redevelopment clearance. Photo: Francisco Flores-Landa / FoundSF.

We learned how the inconsistencies of protections in the laws make identifying important buildings, districts and open spaces an urgent task — before they are threatened. She finished by urging cooperation between preservation, environmental and community organizations: “We absolutely have to band together.”

Bridget’s presentation was compelling in how it moved beyond the familiar development-versus-preservation debate. She is a veteran of artfully tying the past to the present, and this is an inflection point in our history when, without stewardship, we stand to lose tremendous resources for future generations.

Read more about Bridget’s work at **architecture-history.com**.

MONDAY ZOOMS WILL RESUME
SEPTEMBER 14

UPCOMING

Monday, August 31	ON BREAK
Monday, September 7	ON BREAK
Monday, September 14	MICHAEL BARNES

SPECIAL GUEST

Monday, September 14 · 5:00 PM

Michael Barnes, housing policy analyst

NEW ARTICLE BY MICHAEL BARNES

How cities are going to lose all control over housing development, soon

Wiener's housing laws are set up for cities and counties to fail, allowing developers to do almost anything they want, for many years to come.

Read it in **48 Hills**

Or the expanded essay **here**

SUPPORT THE WORK

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

DONATE TO WAKE UP

— Amy Kalish, President and Founder

Affordability, Safety, Environmental Quality, and Local Accountability

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