



Panoramic Hill Association

PO Box 5428, Berkeley, CA 94705

September 12, 2015

Mr. Greg Minor
City of Oakland
Assistant to the City Administrator – Special Permits and Nuisance Abatement
1 Frank Ogawa Plaza
3rd Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

Re: 1001 Panoramic Way / Parcel # 048H 7698 024 02

Dear Mr. Minor,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Panoramic Hill Association (PHA), which represents residents of the Panoramic Hill neighborhood in Oakland and Berkeley.

We are writing to express our concern over the ongoing commercial use, of the vacant residential home at 1001 Panoramic Way, for large events such as weddings, parties and meetings, which are reportedly taking place on an almost weekly basis.

We understand that a Notice of Violation was issued in May 2014, to the owners of 1001 Panoramic Way citing the property as being operated for Group Assembly Commercial Activities, which are not allowed in this residentially zoned location (RH-1), and that the property owners were ordered to cease the activity. It is also our understanding that the property owners appealed the order and that a hearing was held by the City of Oakland on November 8, 2014, whereupon it was concluded that the activity is in fact a code violation and the order to cease the activity was re-iterated.

Nevertheless,, nearby residents report continued regular use of the property for commercial events; including large catered events (with hundreds of guests). The use appears to be steadily increasing month by month.

Upon hearing multiple reports from neighbors at the PHA board meeting last Tuesday evening, the Board voted unanimously to send this letter to the City of Oakland requesting that the City actively enforce the existing code violation decision and order, to cease commercial activities.

It is important for you to understand that the context of our concern is founded on the serious fire / life safety dangers that exist at this location.

Our neighborhood is among the most dangerous areas for potential loss of life from wildfire in California. The neighborhood is very similar to the Hiller Highlands area of Oakland, where 25 persons lost their lives during the first phases of the 1991 Oakland Hills fire. The Panoramic Hill area is more hazardous than Hiller Highlands in terms of infrastructure:

1. Panoramic Hill is surrounded on three sides by wildfire-prone grassland and forest;
2. Panoramic Hill is only accessible by one, narrow, sub-standard, single-lane road for access and egress.
3. This one road contains multiple sharp, switch-back curves, making it very difficult for large vehicles such as fire trucks, buses and vans, to negotiate. Large fire engines cannot access the area; only smaller emergency vehicles can negotiate the hairpin turns.

In addition, the 1001 Panoramic Way property occupies the most remote and vulnerable location at the very top of Panoramic Hill. 1001 Panoramic is surrounded on all sides by wild grasslands or woods. The home sits at the far end of the twisting Panoramic roadway; and the City of Berkeley Fire Department estimates that it would take a fire truck more than 20 minutes to reach this location from the nearest Fire Station, under the best of circumstances.

Finally, it should be noted that there is inadequate water pressure at 1001 Panoramic to fight a significant fire because the house is built *uphill* from the local water tank and the nearest fire hydrant is hundreds of yards away.

So it is into this uniquely hazardous location that we now have large parties with hundreds of guests a month who are generally unaware of the severity of fire dangers surrounding them, congregating. Drinking alcohol and out-of-door smoking often go hand-in-hand; intoxicated smokers pose a particular danger in dry grassland environments. Guests can easily leave the "property" and walk onto the East Bay Regional Park District and University of California wildlands while drinking, smoking, and unintentionally engaging in reckless behavior.

Residents of our neighborhood have been instructed year after year, by Berkeley and Oakland Fire Fighters that we *must* evacuate by foot in the event of a major fire, in order to keep the road open for access by critical emergency vehicles; as a result, local residents know about the special foot-only evacuation routes that are available to them and what to do in an emergency situation. It is doubtful that patrons of the events at 1001 Panoramic will be sufficiently educated regarding these difficult evacuation routes and protocols, thus further endangering the lives of both patrons of 1001 Panoramic Way and the year-round residents already at risk.

It is in this context that we kindly request that the City of Oakland enforce the existing order to cease commercial activity at 1001 Panoramic Way.

Sincerely,



Michael Kelly
President Panoramic Hill Association

cc: Chris Candell
Heather Klein
Dan Kalb
Lori Droste
Sandy Boyd
Tom Miller