

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Stefan Elgstrand
510.981.7103
selgstrand@cityofberkeley.info

Marc Steyer, Principal, Tipping Structural Engineers
m.steyer@tippingstructural.com
510.549.1906 ext 233

John Caner, Convener, Community for a Cultural Civic Center
510.501.0256
johncaner@gmail.com

LEADERS TO BRIEF COUNCIL ON “GAME CHANGER” CIVIC CENTER SEISMIC STUDY

(Berkeley, CA) — On March 22, representatives from City staff, Tipping Structural Engineers (TSE), and Community for a Cultural Civic Center (CCCC) will brief the Berkeley City Council on an innovative seismic study of the Maudelle Shirek Building (MSB) and Veteran’s Memorial Building (VMB). According to former Mayor Tom Bates, a member of the CCCC coordinating committee, this seismic study is a “game changer” in making the seismic retrofit of these historic Civic Center buildings more possible. The total seismic retrofit cost for both buildings, previously estimated at \$103 million at the “Immediate Occupancy” level, has been reduced to about \$50 million for a slightly lower performance target in which essential repairs could likely be made within a matter of weeks.

After the release of the Civic Center Vision & Implementation Plan in 2020, Tipping Engineering suggested that the retrofit of these buildings could be done at a much lower cost by using detailed analytical methods to identify and “harvest” the buildings’ inherent strength, and by slightly varying the retrofit standards. Moreover, this approach would be much less intrusive to interior and exterior spaces, and also add significant square footage to the VMB.

Mayor Jesse Arreguin shared, “I am impressed by this amazing City and community joint effort. In our recent Vision 2050 workshop, Council agreed to keep the renovation of these two buildings and the park in the scope of the plan. We are hoping to include the seismic retrofits and renovation of these two legacy buildings and the park in future infrastructure plans now that we have a lower cost approach from the Tipping team.”

In September 2020 City Council approved the vision proposed by the Civic Center Vision and Implementation Plan conducted by Gehl Studio. There was broad consensus for the VMB to be converted into an “Arts Hub” and MSB into a “Berkeley Center” with meeting rooms and exhibition space. There was less consensus on the park, with suggestions for more greenery and biodiversity, as well as improved outdoor performance space. Council has approved \$200,000 for Phase 2 of the Vision Plan, which will start in July of this year, to develop community consensus on preferred designs and uses for both the park and these two historic buildings.

The Maudelle Shirek Building (a/k/a “Old City Hall”) retrofit is largely achieved by strengthening key elements in the basement with limited interventions elsewhere in the building; while the Veterans Memorial Building retrofit is achieved largely by building two additions in the back courtyards/parking areas that would act as buttresses to support the building in the event of a major earthquake. The result is a dramatic drop in seismic retrofit costs, by over 50%, for both buildings including lower-end and higher-end retrofit options – with the added benefit of additional usable space. See table below for costs and description of options.

This “low-bono” study conducted by Tipping Structural Engineers (TSE) was co-funded by the City of Berkeley and Community for a Cultural Civic Center (CCCC) members and partners, including the Berkeley Historical Society (BHS), Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association (BAHA), and the Downtown Berkeley Association (DBA), with Berkeley Partners for Parks (BFP) acting as fiscal agent. According to Marc Steyer, principal of Tipping Structural Engineers, “Under normal circumstances, this project would have run well over \$100,000, but CCCC asked us to double sharpen our pencils. With our deep commitment to the City of Berkeley, we told the team that we could do the seismic study for \$28,000.” The CCCC coalition then pledged to fundraise half the cost (\$14,000) if matched by the City. Liam Garland, Director of Public Works stepped up and agreed to make this a joint City-Community project.

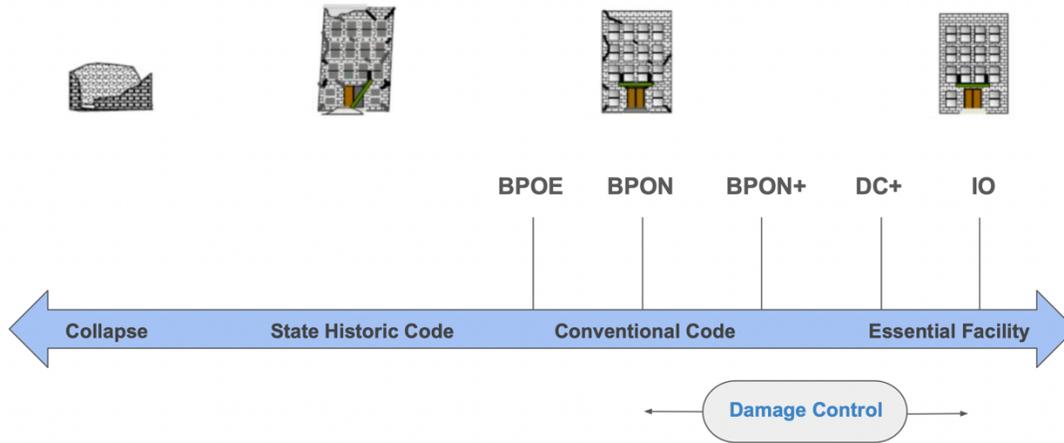
According to John Caner, convener of CCCC and CEO of the Downtown Berkeley Association, “This has been an incredible team effort. We are so grateful to the support of Tipping Structural Engineers and the Department of Public Works in bringing forth this innovative retrofit plan. And we are proud of the broad community involvement with our group, Community for a Cultural Civic Center. We invite others to join us in creating a big tent of community engagement, particularly as we move forward with Phase 2 of the Vision Plan.”

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Tipping Structural Engineers is a service-forward structural engineering practice that unlocks greater possibilities for our clients and communities. Our unconventional approach blends creativity with technical mastery to push the boundaries of engineering. By focusing on project goals before calculations, boldly asking the difficult questions, and leveraging our deep understanding of structural behavior, we turn vision into reality, often in unexpected ways.

Community for a Cultural Civic Center (CCCC) is a group of community members who are passionate about the renovation of Berkeley’s historic Civic Center and Park, including historic and park advocates, neighbors, and arts and business community members—and any other interested persons! Please visit www.berkeleyccc.org to learn more and join our meetings—open to all!

Terminology



TIPPING
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*Building damage state graphics from FEMA-389, courtesy of R. Hamburger. See “Description” below for what the above initials mean.

SEISMIC STUDIES (2022 \$M)	LOWER END RETROFITS		HIGHER END RETROFITS	
	BPOE (2018)	BPON+ (2021/22)	DC+ (2021/22)	IO (2018)
Maudelle Shirek Building*	\$17.1	\$6.4	\$25.3	\$35.4
Veterans Memorial Building	\$19.3	\$10.4	\$25.3	\$67.5
TOTAL**	\$36.4	\$16.8	\$50.6	\$102.9
% Drop in Cost		54%		51%
Description	Basic Performance Objective for Existing Buildings: life safety	Better Performance Objective for New Buildings	Performance at high end of Damage Control range, just below IO	Immediate Occupancy: performance criteria for essential functions
Est Downtime after Major EQ	Likely loss	Months or year+	Days or weeks	Immediate

** A/k/a “Old City Hall”

* Seismic structural retrofit only, does not include mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and other upgrades.