

December 20, 2001

Planning Department
City of Berkeley
2120 Milvia Street
Berkeley, CA 94704

Dear Planning Officer;

I am writing to inquire about Use Permit requirements to legally operate "The Shipyard" Artist Studios/Storage at 1010 Murray Street, across the street from the Crucible. Mr. Maurice Norrise has informed us that Berkeley does not have on file a current Use Permit for the property and we would like to work with you to bring the property and permits up to date.

Here's the history. For the past three years, 1010 Murray Street has operated as a gallery with a small workspace for emerging East Bay artists. This fall, we began developing studios and larger work spaces on site in an effort to address the acute lack of affordable studio space in the region for large scale sculptural work. Our efforts have produced about 15 new studio spaces, each available for \$150-\$200 a month and a large outdoor community workspace and fabrication area. These studios are filled with a alumni from Crucible classes, students from local schools, and many sculptors/metal fabricators from throughout the Bay Area.

Using a model that is has become a common art space strategy in Europe, we have acquired used shipping containers and arranged them on site to create the various studio/storage spaces. Shipping containers are metal cubes, 8' x 20' x 8.5', and are commonly used on construction sites, warehouses, and other commercial lots for temporary offices, shops, storage sheds, etc in Berkeley and elsewhere. We have neatly arranged these containers around the perimeter of our lot, leaving the center courtyard open as a shared building area for all Shipyard citizens to use(see drawing). The artists in The Shipyard do the majority of their work outdoor in the center courtyard, and use the containers to store their materials and tools as well as carry out some smaller scale work.

We feel this use of the shipping containers is consistent with current uses of other shipping containers on many MU-LI lots in West Berkeley and surrounding areas. Our elaboration of the containers into studio/shop spaces is part of a growing movement worldwide to recycle and retrofit shipping containers for non-cargo purposes- creating facilities ranging from mobile medical labs to turn key manufacturing shops. We are finding the containers to be an important and reproducible solution for the severe shortage of affordable artist studio space in the region. And in the process, we have also found the containers to resonate nicely with the maritime history and current activities in Berkeley and the rest of the East Bay port region.

As you may already know, the container based studios at 1010 Murray Street are a major new contribution to the “art renaissance” currently underway on Murray Street. The Crucible began the process over three years ago, and since then many buildings on the block have transformed towards primarily creative pursuits. The new energy and activity on the block has significantly reduced homelessness and crime in the area, and generally helped to clean up an otherwise challenged neighborhood. 1010 Murray Street has been a central part of this neighborhood transformation as The Bacca Galley and we will continue these efforts in our new configuration as The Shipyard.

We look forward to working with the Planning Department of the City of Berkeley to address the issues necessary to update our Use Permit. Please contact me, Jim Mason, the Director of The Shipyard, with any questions you might have. You can reach me at: jimmason@longnow.org or 415.305.0955.

Thank you,

Jim Mason
Director, The Shipyard