



SIERRA  
CLUB  
FOUNDED 1892

## Northern Alameda County Group

(Alameda-Albany-Berkeley-Emeryville-Oakland-Piedmont-San Leandro)

2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite I, Berkeley, CA 94702

510-848-0800 (voice) · 510-848-3383 (fax)

October 27, 2015

Mayor Bates and Berkeley City Council

2180 Milvia Street, 5th Floor

Berkeley, CA 94704

### Re: Support for Affordable Housing Items on the October 27, 2015 agenda.

The Sierra Club has longstanding national, statewide, and local policies around affordable housing. We believe that when people can afford to live near where they work — particularly in transit-rich, walkable, urban areas — there is an aggregate reduction of sprawl and greenhouse-gas emissions. Multi-unit housing sited compactly within urban areas also requires fewer resources for construction than do suburban single-family houses.<sup>1</sup> We are very concerned about the jobs-housing imbalance in Berkeley, particularly in light of alarming statistics that suggest an unprecedented increase in rents and resultant displacement from this community.<sup>2</sup> For these reasons, we support the following proposals on your agenda tonight:

- **Item 18, Requesting the Reintroduction of AB 1229 or Similar Legislation.** Such legislation is consistent with our policies on expansion and promotion of affordable housing opportunities.
- **Item 21, Streamline the Permit Process for Housing Projects with a Majority or More Affordable Units.** This is consistent with our policy to support incentives for housing production within infill areas.<sup>3</sup>
- **Item 25, Housing Trust Fund Loan for \$1,000,000.** Our current housing affordability crisis now more than ever warrants this significant investment in the production and rehabilitation of affordable housing.
- **Item 31, Revise or Waive Housing Trust Fund Guidelines on Predevelopment Funds.** We support enhanced ways to finance affordable housing and acknowledge that predevelopment costs can be significant.

We also provide the following comments on **Item 27, the Green Affordable Housing Package**, which we hope you and the Planning Commission will take into account in shaping a policy:

- Streamlined review should only apply to 100% affordable developments and must include robust and meaningful community input.
- The “inducement” to trade parking for affordable housing should be tightly crafted to assure that parking reductions result in affordable housing built on site, and no substitutions/buy-outs are available.
- Clipper cards/Transit passes, car share, bike parking and other transit benefits should continue to be provided and/or expanded for workers and residents.

We applaud your efforts to combat Berkeley’s housing crisis and offer our support and expertise. Please contact us at (510) 848-0800 should you have any questions.

Olga Bolotina,  
Chair, Northern Alameda County Group

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sierraclub.org/san-francisco-bay/environmental-justice>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/uploadedFiles/Planning\\_and\\_Development/Level\\_3\\_-\\_Commissions/Commission\\_for\\_Planning/2015-2023%20Berkeley%20Housing%20Element\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/uploadedFiles/Planning_and_Development/Level_3_-_Commissions/Commission_for_Planning/2015-2023%20Berkeley%20Housing%20Element_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> CNRCC Growth Management Guidelines, IV, 19. ( <http://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce/mother-lode-chapter/Website/Growth%20Management%20Guidelines.pdf> )