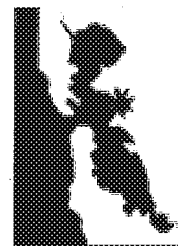




WELLSTONE DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL CLUB



November 16, 2015

Dear Mayor and Members of the Berkeley City Council,

In the face of the worst affordable housing crisis in the Bay Area's – and Berkeley's – history, the Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club calls upon you to pass several common-sense and progressive items on your agenda at the November 17 and December 1 meetings.

Items on the November 17, 2015, Agenda

The white-hot rental market provides property owners with unprecedented pressures and opportunities to evict long-term tenants in favor of new applicants who can afford a significantly higher rent. At the same time, we witnessed the tragic loss of lives over the summer at Library Gardens, indicating that the Rental Housing Safety Program, enacted at the beginning of the 21st century, is woefully underfunded and fails to provide adequate protections for existing tenants in Berkeley. For these reasons, we strongly support both **Item 26: Refer to the Rent Stabilization Board to Consider Creating an Ordinance Preventing Evictions for Minor Offenses** and **Item 23: Revising the Rental Housing Safety Program**. These two items are more critical than ever in giving tenants a secure, safe and habitable home.

The combination of Proposition 13 and a booming economy has led to an unprecedented increase in the value of entitlements – particularly for larger, multi-unit properties. A progressive policy solution is requiring property owners to share a minuscule portion of their windfall profits with the Berkeley community. Therefore, we support the 11/17 Work Session Item: **Business License Tax on Rental Property** and its swift placement onto the November 2016 ballot. While the Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club has not yet taken a position on the merits of the ballot measure language itself, this item appears to be generally consistent with our principles of economic justice.

Lastly, we continue to be saddened by the rise in members of the Berkeley's homeless population, many of whom are victims of the Bay Area's displacement pressures and a woefully inadequate social services and mental health support system. We support **Item 24: City Manager Referral: Implementation of Tier One Recommendations from the Homeless Task Force**, which calls on the City to invest in win-win strategies such as expanding its Homeless Outreach Team and Mobile Crisis Team, increasing funding for Crisis Intervention Training, increasing the number of public restrooms, and providing additional storage spaces and warming centers for the homeless population. Of course, we all recognize that the ultimate solution to homelessness is to find permanent housing opportunities. Therefore, we also support the longer-term suggestions laid out in Tier 2 of the Task Force's recommendations.

Items on the December 1, 2015, Agenda

We understand that several housing items were continued from the October 27, 2015, meeting onto this agenda. We would like to express our support for the items below.

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We were heartened by your vote for the City Manager to issue a Request for Information to affordable housing nonprofits and land trusts so that they can specify any projects in the pipeline that could benefit from the immediate receipt of predevelopment. Several housing nonprofits testified at the October 27 City Council and November 4 Housing Advisory Commission meetings about the need for this critical funding. We thus urge you to support the item to **revise the Housing Trust Fund guidelines on predevelopment funds for affordable housing development**. We also support the items to **grant a \$1 million loan to the Housing Trust Fund** and to **match all National Housing Trust Fund grants awarded to recipient projects in Berkeley**. Passage of all three of those items will demonstrate that the City of Berkeley is putting its money where its mouth is in support of new and rehabilitated affordable housing development in Berkeley.

We understand that, at your special session on December 1, you will discuss possible solutions to the challenges of skyrocketing rents, rapid displacement, and loss of diversity exposed in the 2015 nexus study and most recent Housing Element. We sign on to all of the recommendations of the East Bay Housing Organizations (as forwarded to you in a communication on October 27), with one modification that is denoted in italics:

- Update the *required percentage of inclusionary units and affordable housing mitigation fee* (as per the July 2015 updated nexus study) to maximize *inclusionary housing opportunities in transit-rich areas of Berkeley* and funds for the Housing Trust Fund and the development of new affordable units;
- Place on the 2016 general ballot a measure to increase the Business License Tax and set the new tax level as high as is legally allowed and politically practical (*as discussed above*);
- Direct revenue from any leftover funds from taxes on Short Term Rentals to the Housing Trust Fund; and
- Strengthen affordable housing expectations for new buildings exceeding 75 feet in Berkeley's Downtown Area as part of the required "significant community benefits."

Thank you for your consideration of these important matters.

The Wellstone Club Coordinating Committee

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