February 6, 2019

Planning Commission
1947 Center Street
Berkeley, CA 94704
Re: In Support of the Green Affordable Housing Package Referral

To the City of Berkeley Planning Commission,

On behalf the Associated Students of the University of California, representing the nearly 42,000 students of UC Berkeley, we are writing to express our strong support for the Green Affordable Housing Package Referral.

Increased housing density is urgently required in the City of Berkeley, especially in student-heavy areas where the over-enrollment of the campus and the implications of the broader housing crisis have created an epicenter of housing troubles. The requirement to include parking spaces in new developments severely limits the density at which we can build. Parking spaces are extremely expensive to design and construct on the developer side, which makes it less financially feasible to include more important elements such as affordable housing units. While the 2012 Downtown Plan reduced the parking requirements in the downtown area to a relatively progressive ratio, the Planning Commission must continue these efforts by doing the same in other parts of Berkeley.\(^1\)

We understand parking is an important amenity for many. However, students here in Berkeley are driving at profoundly low rates. Survey data from the campus indicates that only 5% of Berkeley students use motorized vehicles to get to and from campus, with 11% using public transportation and 84% walking or biking.\(^2\) These walkable lifestyles indicate a distinct need to rethink how we plan our cities and new housing developments. City policy should be encouraging these environmentally sustainable habits, rather than keeping in place the archaic parking requirements that enable car dependency.

We are inspired by the efforts of Supervisor Jane Kim in San Francisco, who led the charge to make San Francisco the first major city in the country to eliminate minimum parking requirements for all kinds of development.\(^3\) We believe that it is Berkeley’s obligation to its residents and to the planet to quickly follow suit.

Sincerely,

Alexander Wilfert, ASUC President
Hung Huynh, ASUC Executive Vice President
Nuha Khalfay, ASUC External Affairs Vice President
Melany Amarikwa, ASUC Academic Affairs Vice President
Sophie Bandarkar, ASUC Student Advocate
Sarah Abdeshahian, ASUC Campus Organizing Director
Dominick Williams, ASUC Legislative Director

\(^1\)https://www.eastbayexpress.com/SevenDays/archives/2015/10/05/berkeley-councilmember-lori-droste-proposes-reforms-to-prioritize-affordable-housing-over-parking
\(^2\)https://opa.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/berkeley_students_live_0.pdf
\(^3\)http://www.sfexaminer.com/minimum-parking-requirem_large
Angie Chen, ASUC EAVP Local Affairs Director
Somya Jain, ASUC EAVP Local Organizing Manager
Aaron Bryce Lee, ASUC Senator
Amir Wright, ASUC Senator
Amma Sarkodee-Adoo, ASUC Senator
Andy Theocharous, ASUC Senator
Anna Whitney, ASUC Senator
Anne Zepecki, ASUC Senator
Idalys Perez, ASUC Senator
Imran Khan, ASUC Senator
Isabella Chow, Senator
James Li, ASUC Senator
Justin Greenwald, ASUC Senator
Karina Sun, ASUC Senator
Nick Araujo, ASUC Senator
Nikhil Harish, ASUC Senator
Regina Kim, ASUC Senator
Saakshi Goel, ASUC Senator
Stephen Boyle, ASUC Senator
Teddy Lake, ASUC Senator
William Wang, ASUC Senator
Zach Carter, ASUC Senator