



**SUNRISE
BAY AREA**

To: Berkeley City Council

Re: Support for Affordable Housing Overlay

September 8, 2021

Honorable Mayor Arreguín and Members of the City Council:

We write to you in strong support of Councilmember Taplin's proposed Affordable Housing Overlay and urge you to approve the referral. This proposal would provide much-needed permit streamlining and increases to allowable units for 100% affordable housing projects, to reduce per-unit costs and speed up the creation of affordable housing throughout Berkeley. It is an essential step the City of Berkeley must take, both to meet our civic and moral obligation to ensure homes for all members of our community, as well as to meet its upcoming Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) production goals for low- and moderate-income housing while adhering to the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) framework mandated in state Housing Element law.

Creating homes close to high-quality transit and jobs is also essential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, by enabling more households to work, live, and play without relying on private automobiles for every trip. According to the UC Berkeley CoolClimate Network's 2015 Consumption-Based Greenhouse Gas Inventories for the San Francisco Bay Area, the average Berkeley household's consumption-based emissions were 5.3 metric tons per year lower than the region-wide household average. At a bare minimum, meeting Berkeley's RHNA target of approximately 9,000 units would represent an region-wide emissions reduction

of over 47,000 metric tons, compared to those homes being built elsewhere in the region. Under the RHNA allocation, moderate- and low-income households would occupy up to two-thirds of these units.

In other words, meeting this target in Berkeley is the equivalent of taking over 10,000 cars off the road. This is likely an under-estimate: it doesn't account for the fact that new construction in Berkeley is going to be gas-free, which is an additional 1.94 metric tons per year of reductions for a typical household. Nor does it consider that low-income households, which the Affordable Housing Overlay targets, are disproportionately pushed out of the region into "super-commute" territory, and as such this would have a proportionately larger benefit to those households.

As advocates for housing and climate justice in our local community, we urge this Council to adopt the Affordable Housing Overlay as a justice-oriented strategy in meeting our community's need for urgent climate action.

In the City's 2018 greenhouse gas inventory, transportation accounted for 59% of Berkeley's emissions, and residential natural gas accounted for 17%. Eliminating these emissions for as many households as possible is a relatively small step our local government can take to have a meaningful positive impact on the global climate crisis. Berkeley does not exist in a vacuum, and welcoming more neighbors into our community to enjoy the privilege (and necessity) of a lower-emission lifestyle is critical to meeting California's climate action goals.

We the undersigned community groups thank you for your service to the City of Berkeley, and urge you to pass the Affordable Housing Overlay referral as a critical step toward housing and climate justice.

Respectfully yours,

Ben Gould
Berkeley Neighbors for Housing and Climate Action, Steering Committee Member

Ruben Hernandez Story
East Bay Young Democrats, Policy Director

Libby Lee-Egan
North Berkeley Now!

Betsy Thagard
South Berkeley Now!

Sunrise Movement - Bay Area Chapter