

MAR 04 2020

RECEIVED
at Meeting

March 4, 2020

To: City of Berkeley Planning Commission
Re: Support for parking reform and TDM recommendations
From: South Berkeley NOW!

Dear Planning Commission:

We wholeheartedly support the recommendations to eliminate minimum requirements for off-street parking and to institute measures that encourage the use of alternative forms of transportation such as walking, bicycling and public transit (TDM). Approval of these changes is a major step in our city wide efforts to create a comprehensive housing, climate, and transportation policy. In addition to encouraging more infill housing, this important measure will contribute to less reliance on cars, increased pedestrian and bicycle safety, and increased utilization of public transit.

The proposed changes will apply to all new housing including all lot sizes not just the ones for 10 units or more (with exceptions for fire prone areas). Variance findings are eliminated. Without a requirement for new parking, smaller parcels of land will be able to provide thousands of small infill units without disrupting existing neighborhood patterns in Berkeley's lower density neighborhoods. Larger projects will provide parking based on the actual need and a parking maximum will be instituted in high transit areas so that we don't build too much parking where public transit is available.

Not requiring parking spaces will allow more housing to be built, will reduce the cost of building, and will lower Berkeley's greenhouse gas emissions. These changes to the Zoning Code will reflect our current and our long-term needs for housing, transit and for reduced pollution and CO2 emissions.

We urge the Planning Commission to approve these policies tonight with a strong and unanimous approval. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Teresa Clarke

On behalf of SBN! Steering Committee, Ariella Granatt, Betsy Thagard, Deborah Matthews, Jodi Levin, Jon Lau, Matt Lewis, Peter Waller, Tommaso Sciortino, Matt Nichols, and many, many more SBN! members.

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In pursuing goals, the city of Berkeley needs to think beyond punitive measures and decide what can be done in a proactive, positive framework. Otherwise a laudable goal such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions simply becomes an excuse to cater to developers who want to maximize profits by eliminating parking provisions. Decisions based on wishful thinking have unintended consequences that can result in exactly the opposite of what is intended.

Eliminating parking will not “shift transportation demand onto public transit.” How would that even be manifested? People are not going to march on City Hall demanding more bus service. They will simply find other places to park their cars, with the result that city streets will become even more congested, with cars parked on both sides, making it difficult for firetrucks and other emergency vehicles to pass, and impossible for street-cleaning machines. Keep in mind that people are not robots; they do more than just commute to and from work!

Car usage has been confused with car storage, and they are not the same. Reducing car storage space has the hopeful intention of reducing car ownership, but that will not succeed until this country as a whole decides to invest in a massive increase in public transportation. For years, car production and oil have provided the backbone of the economy, and most infrastructure spending has gone into roads, highways, and bridges. Several generations have grown up enjoying the mobility that car transportation gives, and car ownership is very much tied to lifestyle. This is not easy to reverse, although given the climate change crisis, we both should and must.

Car *usage* can most certainly be reduced by providing practical alternatives. In suggesting bikes or electric scooters and tricycles, however, the City reveals not only an unwillingness to give serious thought to the problem but an effort to push the burden of solutions onto the residents. Buses and trains, on the other hand, are accessible to almost everyone, including senior citizens and those who are mobility impaired, and therefore provide an opportunity for city planners to be a positive force in working towards goals.

Current and future residents deserve more than lip service and vague promises of considering the idea of more transportation provisions. To merely eliminate parking in new structures is putting the cart before the horse, because without hand-in-hand plans for more public transit, it will only create more problems. We need to see proactive plans for transportation alternatives being put into action, not just measures that punish people for driving and owning cars.

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