



**BERKELEY CITY COUNCIL BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING**

**Thursday, September 11, 2025
10:00 AM**

Cypress Room – 2180 Milvia Street, 1st Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704

Committee Members:

Mayor Adena Ishii, Councilmembers Rashi Kesarwani and Brent Blackaby
Alternate: Councilmember Igor Tregub

This meeting will be conducted in a hybrid model with both in-person attendance and virtual participation. All Committee meetings are recorded.

Use this URL <https://cityofberkeley-info.zoomgov.com/j/1602980296> to access the meeting remotely. To request to speak, use the “raise hand” function in Zoom. To join by phone: Dial **1-669-254-5252 or 1-833-568-8864 (Toll Free)** and Enter **Meeting ID: 160 298 0296**. To provide public comment, press *9 and wait to be recognized by the Chair. To submit a written communication for the Committee’s consideration and inclusion in the public record, email policycommittee@berkeleyca.gov.

This meeting will be conducted in accordance with the Brown Act, Government Code Section 54953. Any member of the public may attend this meeting, however, if you are feeling sick, please do not attend the meeting in person.

Pursuant to the City Council Rules of Procedure and State Law, the presiding officer may remove, or cause the removal of, an individual for disrupting the meeting. Prior to removing an individual, the presiding officer shall warn the individual that their behavior is disrupting the meeting and that their failure to cease their behavior may result in their removal. The presiding officer may then remove the individual if they do not promptly cease their disruptive behavior. “Disrupting” means engaging in behavior during a meeting of a legislative body that actually disrupts, disturbs, impedes, or renders infeasible the orderly conduct of the meeting and includes, but is not limited to, a failure to comply with reasonable and lawful regulations adopted by a legislative body, or engaging in behavior that constitutes use of force or a true threat of force.

California Government Code Section 84308 (Levine Act) Parties to a proceeding involving a license, permit, or other entitlement for use are required to disclose if they made contributions over \$500 within the prior 12 months to any City employee or officer. Parties and participants with a financial interest are prohibited from making more than \$500 in contributions to a decisionmaker for the 12 months after the final decision is rendered on the proceeding. The above contribution disclosures and restrictions do not apply when the proceeding is competitively bid, or involves a personnel or labor contract. For more information, see Government Code Section 84308.

AGENDA

Roll Call

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Matters

Minutes for Approval

Draft minutes for the Committee's consideration and approval.

1. Minutes - July 10, 2025

Committee Action Items

The public may comment on each item listed on the agenda for action as the item is taken up. The Chair will determine the number of persons interested in speaking on each item. Up to ten (10) speakers may speak for two minutes. If there are more than ten persons interested in speaking, the Chair may limit the public comment for all speakers to one minute per speaker.

Following review and discussion of the items listed below, the Committee may continue an item to a future committee meeting, or refer the item to the City Council.

2. Remove pre-transfer eligibility restriction of the transfer tax rebate for wildfire hardening

From: Disaster and Fire Safety Commission

Referred: May 5, 2025

Due: October 12, 2025

Recommendation: Adopt first reading of an ordinance removing the 1-year pre-transfer eligibility restriction of the transfer tax rebate for wildfire hardening from BMC 7.52.060, to encourage early mitigation efforts.

Financial Implications: See report

Contact: Keith May, Commission Secretary, (510) 981-3473

3. FY 27-28 Biennial Budget Process and Overview

From: City Manager

Contact: David White, City Manager's Office, (510) 981-7000

Unscheduled Items

These items are not scheduled for discussion or action at this meeting. The Committee may schedule these items to the Action Calendar of a future Committee meeting.

Unscheduled Items

4. Recommendations for the Formulation of Advanced Fiscal Policies to Institutionalize Strategic Bond Issuance, Optimize Municipal Investment Returns, and Leverage Intergovernmental and Philanthropic Capital Funding From: Councilmember Taplin (Author), Councilmember Bartlett (Co-Sponsor) Referred: June 2, 2025

Due: November 9, 2025

Recommendation: 1. Establish a Structured Bond Issuance Framework
Refer to the City Manager development and presentation to the Council of a comprehensive fiscal policy that institutionalizes a regular, predictive schedule for general obligation bond issuance. This policy should be informed by actuarial and capital market analysis of the City's bonding capacity and be modeled on established frameworks utilized in fiscally disciplined jurisdictions such as San Francisco and Santa Monica. The goal is to remediate the City's substantial deferred maintenance liabilities and strategically advance the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

2. Modernize Investment Policy and Establish a Capital Grant Matching Fund
Refer to the City Manager the enactment of a detailed review and performance benchmarking of the City's current investment policies, ordinances, and resolutions. Based on this review, the City Manager should recommend:

- Amendments to align Berkeley's portfolio management practices with those of peer jurisdictions in the Bay Area;
- Asset strategies that maintain compliance with CA Government Code §53600 et seq. while improving yields through enhanced diversification and duration matching;
- Establishment of a dedicated Capital Grant Matching Fund, capitalized with a designated portion of net investment returns, to maximize Berkeley's competitiveness in securing grants under federal programs such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and state-funded resilience initiatives.

3. Develop a Comparative Bond Issuance Analysis and Timeline

Refer the City Manager to conduct a comprehensive analysis of historical general obligation bond issuance and debt service rates in Berkeley and comparable jurisdictions. The analysis should:

- Examine 30 years of municipal bond trends, showing the consistency of low interest rates during fiscally disciplined cycles;
- Compare Berkeley's historical borrowing costs with those of San Francisco, Santa Monica, and Palo Alto;
- Demonstrate the efficacy of maintaining a regular issuance schedule every 6–10 years to preserve low borrowing rates and steady bond ratings;
- Present a 30-year fiscal projection showing that with prudent debt layering and consistent retirement of obligations, Berkeley can issue up to \$250–\$300 million in bonds in successive tranches while maintaining fiscal health and AAA-quality debt service coverage ratios.

The City Manager is requested to return with a projected 25–30 year financing timeline that identifies capital milestones, projected issuances, debt service loads, and cost-saving thresholds compared to inflation-driven delays. This timeline shall be paired with policy recommendations to ensure adherence to long-range financial planning objectives.

Financial Implications: See report

Contact: Terry Taplin, Councilmember, District 2, (510) 981-7120

Items for Future Agendas

- Requests by Committee Members to add items to the next agenda

Adjournment

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*Written communications submitted by mail or e-mail to the Budget & Finance Committee by 5:00 p.m. the Friday before the Committee meeting will be distributed to the members of the Committee in advance of the meeting and retained as part of the official record.*

*This meeting will be conducted in accordance with the Brown Act, Government Code Section 54953 and applicable Executive Orders as issued by the Governor that are currently in effect. Members of the City Council who are not members of the standing committee may attend a standing committee meeting even if it results in a quorum being present, provided that the non-members only act as observers and do not participate in the meeting. If only one member of the Council who is not a member of the committee is present for the meeting, the member may participate in the meeting because less than a quorum of the full Council is present. Any member of the public may attend this meeting. Questions regarding public participation may be addressed to the City Clerk Department (510) 981-6900.*



### COMMUNICATION ACCESS INFORMATION:

This meeting is being held in a wheelchair accessible location. To request a disability-related accommodation(s) to participate in the meeting, including auxiliary aids or services, please contact the Disability Services specialist at [ada@berkeleyca.gov](mailto:ada@berkeleyca.gov), (510) 981-6418 (V), or (510) 981-6347 (TDD) at least three business days before the meeting date. Attendees at public meetings are reminded that other attendees may be sensitive to various scents, whether natural or manufactured, in products and materials. Please help the City respect these needs.

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I hereby certify that the agenda for this meeting of the Standing Committee of the Berkeley City Council was posted at the display case located near the walkway in front of the Maudelle Shirek Building, 2134 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, as well as on the City's website, on September 4, 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Numainville".

Mark Numainville, City Clerk

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MINUTES

Roll Call: 10:05 a.m.

Present: Councilmember Tregub (for Blackaby), Ishii, Kesarwani

Absent: None

Councilmember Tregub participated remotely under the Just Cause exception in the Brown Act as amended by AB 2449.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Matters: 0 Speakers

Minutes for Approval

Draft minutes for the Committee's consideration and approval.

1. Minutes - June 12 and 17, 2025

Action: M/S/C (Ishii/Kesarwani) to approve the minutes of 6/12/2025 and 6/17/2025.

Vote: All Ayes.

Committee Action Items

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Financial Implications: See report

Contact: Keith May, Commission Secretary, (510) 981-3473

Action: 2 speakers. Item continued to next meeting.

Committee Action Items

**3. Recommendations for the Formulation of Advanced Fiscal Policies to Institutionalize Strategic Bond Issuance, Optimize Municipal Investment Returns, and Leverage Intergovernmental and Philanthropic Capital Funding From: Councilmember Taplin (Author), Councilmember Bartlett (Co-Sponsor)
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Financial Implications: See report

Contact: Terry Taplin, Councilmember, District 2, (510) 981-7120

Action: Item continued to next meeting.

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- None

Items for Future Agendas

- None

Adjournment

Action: M/S/C (Ishii/Kesarwani) to adjourn the meeting.

Vote: All Ayes.

Adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct record of the Budget & Finance Committee meeting held on July 10, 2025.

Neetu Salwan, Assistant City Clerk

Communications

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CONSENT CALENDAR
May 20, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Disaster and Fire Safety Commission
Submitted by: Greg Murphy, Chairperson
Subject: Remove pre-transfer eligibility restriction of the transfer tax rebate for wildfire hardening

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt first reading of an ordinance removing the 1-year pre-transfer eligibility restriction of the transfer tax rebate for wildfire hardening from BMC 7.52.060, to encourage early mitigation efforts.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Increased utilization of the transfer tax exemption will result in less revenue to the City. Reduced risk of significant costs due to wildfire disaster.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The City of Berkeley has responded to wildfire risk with a variety of mitigation measures to improve prevention. One type of mitigation measure to reduce risk is through home “hardening” which is the process of increasing resistance to wildfire by replacing combustible materials with ignition resistant and/or non-combustible materials and other scientifically proven actions including:

- Reducing the home’s vulnerability to heat.
- Creating fire-resistant surfaces
- Blocking any potential points of ingress for embers and other flammable material.

Retrofitting our homes against seismic damage and destruction has proven to be good policy; hardening against wildfire will be as well.

On September 10, 2024, the council approved the first reading of the Ordinance amending BMC 7.52.060 to include “Wildfire Hardening” in the Real Property Transfer Tax Exceptions. While this encourages homeowners to implement wildfire hardening at the time of sale, the limitation of eligibility to projects undertaken within a year prior to the time of transfer discourages early action, and, to the extent that such measures could be required within Fire Zone 4 as part of EMBER or a future program, dampens the ability to require the recommended measures without imposing hardship. It appears that this was an unintended consequence of the original action.

Therefore, the Commission recommends that the City Council amend Berkeley Municipal Code 7.50.060.L.3 to strike the words “up to one-year” from the current ordinance. The Commission notes that the existing rebate program for seismic upgrades does not have a one-year restriction prior to sale. While the point of sale is often an important opportunity for home renovations, the recent adoption of this ordinance with a one year prior to sale restriction could have the unintended consequence of discouraging homeowners from making wildfire hardening improvements early. Project delivery and property transfer dates are also subject to delay, which contributes to uncertainty, thereby discouraging action without this correction. Possible concerns to address permanence and verification should be studied over the next few years to integrate appropriate documentation filing requirements and/or re-inspection.

The inherent wildfire risk Berkeley faces because of the natural topography and weather conditions is increasing due to climate change which is bringing more frequent and substantial draughts, and higher temperatures. The City of Berkeley has and will continue to implement strategies that reduce the wildfire risk to our community, and should a wildfire occur, improve the emergency response. However, the City is able to address only part of the wildfire risk that the community faces as much of the risk within the City proper lies on private property in the form of structures that pre-date modern fire resistive building codes. While some of the retrofit work that must occur is inexpensive, much of it is expensive and requires professionals. Thus, there is a significant challenge to getting this work completed, even for motivated residents. There is a need to be nimble and adapt our legislation to incentivize the work we know has to get done, work that will help slow an advancing fire so firefighters can protect the community. This amendment will provide an opportunity and mechanism for the City to incentivize homeowners in making these improvements.

Action: Motion to approve the Commission recommendation Katz. Second: Kinosian.

Votes: Ayes: 7 Katz, Wilson, Bradstreet, Herzer-Baptiste, Gordon, Murphy, Kinosian;

Noe’s: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2 Dean, Darling

BACKGROUND

Maintaining our housing stock is essential to the health and welfare of our city. The impacts from a wildfire are not just seen in the structures; it has devastating consequences on mental health, individual sense of security, and our financial stability as a community. The Loma Prieta Earthquake took the Bay Area by surprise on October 17, 1989. According to the California Department of Conservation, that 6.9 magnitude earthquake killed 63 people, injured close to 4,000 and displaced over 12,000 people. Less than two years later, June 25, 1991, Berkeley City Council voted for an exception on transfer property taxes to help homeowners pay for seismically upgrading their homes, and BMC 7.52.060, Sub-section K was established. In the last 10 years, the Finance Department processed approximately 1,200 seismic upgrade rebates for a total of \$7.2M. Since the seismic retrofit exception was included in BMC 7.52.060 in 1991 no expanded safety exceptions have been added. The City of Berkeley is in one of the highest wildfire risk areas in the state. We have a long history of catastrophic wildfire here in Berkeley.

Most notably, in 1923, when a wildfire destroyed more than 600 homes, leaving more than 1,000 residents homeless. In 1991, the Berkeley/Oakland Tunnel Fire was responsible for 25 deaths and destroyed more than 3,000 homes. In 2024 valuation, that conflagration cost 4 billion dollars. Now is the time to improve and adapt policies, and help residents harden their homes against wildfire. Fire science studies are decisive. Wildfire hardening reduces the chances of a home catching fire.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

- The Commission previously evaluated requiring that some investment to harden against wildfire while making major renovations and / or additions to the property will comply owners to undertake these important upgrades and reduce our vulnerability to destruction and damage as a result of a wildfire. This approach was found to be difficult for the Building Department to implement in a broader area, indicating that incentive approaches are important until staff can develop more experience after implementation of these aspects of the EMBER program within Fire Zone 4.
- The Commission considered recommending that pre-transfer rebate value be indexed to inflation, so homeowners not planning to transfer property ownership in the near term retain the real value of the incentive. The Commission did not recommend this feature at this time based on the Council declining to adopt a similar, although higher inflation adjustment for the rebate of home energy efficiency deposits. This feature could be considered in the future after further review.

CITY MANAGER

Remove pre-transfer eligibility restriction of the transfer tax rebate for wildfire hardening

CONSENT CALENDAR
May 20, 2025

The City Manager concurs with the content and recommendations of the Commission's report to the extent that it can incentivize Berkeley residents to perform work on the homes in an effort to reduce fire ignition and spread. The City Manager also acknowledges that increased use of the transfer tax exemption will result in reduced revenues to the City. However, given the limited number of homes that would likely take advantage of the exemption, the overall impact to the City is not anticipated to be significant.

CONTACT PERSON

Keith May, Commission Secretary, Deputy Fire Chief, (510) 510-981-5508.

Attachments:

1: Ordinance Amending Sections of 7.52.060 of the BMC

ORDINANCE NO. ##### -N.S.

AMENDING SECTIONS 7.52.060 OF THE BERKELEY MUNICIPAL CODE
BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the City of Berkeley as follows:

Section 1. That Berkeley Municipal Code 7.52.060, Real Property Transfer Tax Exceptions, Sub-section L, is amended to read as follows:

BMC 7.52.60 Sub-section L

L. 1. Up to one-third of the tax imposed by this chapter shall be rebated, on a dollar for dollar basis, for all expenses incurred on or after January 1, 2025 to "wildfire harden" either any structure which is used exclusively for residential purposes, or any mixed-use structure which contains two or more dwelling units. Multiple rebate applications may be submitted for a partial rebate of the tax paid. However, the total rebate for any combination of seismic retrofit and/or wildfire hardening shall not exceed the maximum of one-third (1/3) of the tax paid per property.

2. The term "wildfire harden" within the meaning of this chapter means work which is the process of increasing resistance to wildfire by replacing combustible materials with ignition resistant and/or non-combustible materials and other scientifically proven actions. The work must be permanent and not vegetation management or gardening adaptations that require continued maintenance. To be eligible for a rebate, the parcel level mitigations set forth in the California Department of Insurance "Safer from Wildfires" Framework REG-2020-00015 adopting California Code of Regulations Title 10, Chapter 5, Subchapter 4.8, Article 4, Section 2644.9 must be satisfactorily completed as determined by the Building Official (when a permit is required) and a Berkeley Fire Department Defensible Space Inspection. These include:

(a) All improvements must be permanent and comply with design, material and construction methods as described in the California Building Code, Chapter 7A. and BMC 19.28.030.

(b) Structures with a wood shake roof must be replaced with a Class A fire rated roof before qualifying for the transfer tax rebate.

(c) Clearing combustible materials including fences and gates, and all movable combustible objects, from the area within five (5) feet of the building being evaluated (Replace with only noncombustible materials.).

(d) At least six (6) inches of noncombustible vertical clearance at the bottom of the exterior surface of the building, measured from the ground up.

(e) Fire-Resistant Vents and Gutter Covers of 1/16 to 1/8 inch noncombustible, corrosion-resistant metal mesh or OSFM Category 8165 approved ember resistant vents.

(f) Multi-paned windows, including dual pane windows, or functional shutters, which when closed, cover the entire window and do not have openings. (g) Enclosed eaves.

(h) Remove combustible materials and debris from under decks and installation of non-combustible siding or ember resistant mesh of 1/8" or finer around deck perimeter.

(i) Removal or absence of combustible structures, including sheds and other outbuildings, from the area within thirty (30) feet of the building being evaluated or, in the event that the applicant does not control the entirety of the area extending thirty feet from the building being evaluated, removal of combustible structures from as much of such area as is under the control of the applicant.

(j) Block spaces between roof covering and sheathing with noncombustible materials (bird stops).

(k) The property upon which the building being evaluated is situated complies with Section 4291 of the Public Resources Code, when applicable, and any applicable local ordinances, governing defensible space.

(l) Any other work found by the Building Official or Fire Marshal (or their designee) to substantially increase the capability of those structures, specified in subsection L.1, to withstand destruction or damage in the event of a wildfire.

3. The work to wildfire harden as provided herein shall be completed either **up to one year** prior to the transfer of property or as provided in subsection L.5.

4. If the work to wildfire harden structures and property provided for herein is to be performed after the transfer of property which is subject to the tax imposed by this chapter, upon completion of such work and certification by the building official as to the amount of the expenses of such work the City Manager or their designee may refund such expenses not to exceed one-third of the tax imposed to the parties to the sale in accordance with the terms of such sale. Any remaining tax shall be retained by the City.

5. From the date of the recordation of the transfer document, the applicant shall have one year to complete all wildfire hardening work and submit a wildfire

hardening verification application to the Codes and Inspection Division of the City of Berkeley. If the work is not completed at the end of one year, that portion which has been completed may be credited as a rebate to the applicant upon submission of a Home Hardening verification application and substantiating documentation, as required by the codes and inspections division of the City of Berkeley, showing the dollar amount of work completed up to that date.

6. Within the one-year period established by paragraph 5, an applicant may request, and the City Manager may approve, an extension of up to one year. The City Manager or their designee may grant such an extension only for good cause. The decision of the City Manager or their designee shall be entirely within their discretion and shall be final.

(a) "Good cause" includes (i) the inability of the applicant, after a prompt and diligent search to find and retain the services of an architect, engineer, contractor or other service provider whose services are necessary for the Home Hardening work; (ii) unforeseen and unforeseeable circumstances such as a significant change in the scope of the Wildfire Hardening work due to circumstances in the field which could not reasonably have been known earlier; and (iii) serious illness or other extraordinary and unforeseeable circumstances that prevented the timely commencement or completion of the Wildfire Hardening work.

(b) "Good cause" does not include (i) ignorance of the applicable City ordinances or regulations concerning the Wildfire Hardening rebate provided in this chapter or state or local laws relating to the standards with which wildfire hardening work must comply; or (ii) any delays which were within the control or responsibility of the applicant.

Section 2. Copies of this Ordinance shall be posted for two days prior to adoption in the display case located near the walkway in front of Council Chambers, 2134 Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Within 15 days of adoption, copies of this Ordinance shall be filed at each branch of the Berkeley Public Library and the title shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation.



No Material
Available for
this Item

There is no material for this item.

City Clerk Department
2180 Milvia Street
Berkeley, CA 94704
(510) 981-6900

The City of Berkeley Budget and Finance Policy Committee Webpage:

<https://berkeleyca.gov/your-government/city-council/council-committees/policy-committee-budget-finance>



BERKELEY CITY COUNCILMEMBER
TERRY TAPLÍN
 DISTRICT 2

Budget and Finance

June 17 2025

To: Honorable Mayor Ishii and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Terry Taplin (Author), Councilmember Bartlett (Co-Sponsor)

Subject: Recommendations for the Formulation of Advanced Fiscal Policies to Institutionalize Strategic Bond Issuance, Optimize Municipal Investment Returns, and Leverage Intergovernmental and Philanthropic Capital Funding.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Establish a Structured Bond Issuance Framework
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BERKELEY CITY COUNCILMEMBER

TERRY TAPLÍN

DISTRICT 2

- Examine 30 years of municipal bond trends, showing the consistency of low interest rates during fiscally disciplined cycles;
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CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Berkeley faces a growing infrastructure deficit exceeding \$1 billion, driven by long-deferred maintenance, rising construction costs, and insufficient capital funding mechanisms. The City's investment-grade bond ratings (Moody's Aa2; S&P AA) position it favorably to issue debt at competitive rates, yet the absence of a formalized bond issuance framework prevents the City from fully leveraging its credit capacity.

Waterfront Capital Liabilities

Key waterfront and Marina-related projects facing urgent capital needs include:

- **Berkeley Pier Replacement:** Closed in 2015 due to structural failure. Replacement is estimated at \$50–70 million, with annual cost escalation exceeding 6%.
- **Marina Infrastructure Overhaul:** Docks, utility lines, lighting, and gangways require comprehensive upgrades. Estimated need: \$15–25 million.
- **Shoreline Armoring and Seismic Resilience:** Required for adaptation to sea-level rise. Estimated capital: \$20+ million.
- **Access and Surface Improvements:** ADA-compliant realignments and pavement reconstruction are estimated at \$5–8 million.

The Marina Fund remains fiscally constrained and cannot absorb these capital needs without structural subsidy or external financing.

City Facility Repair and Seismic Modernization Needs

Deferred maintenance and life-safety deficiencies persist across several major civic structures:

- **Frances Albrier Community Center:** Seismic retrofitting and HVAC modernization estimated at \$15 million.
- **Old City Hall:** Unoccupied due to seismic risk and systems degradation. Renovation estimated at \$50–60 million.



- Veterans Memorial Building: Structural stabilization and ADA compliance upgrades estimated at \$35–40 million.
- MLK Jr. Civic Center: Systemic repairs for HVAC, elevators, and roofing exceed \$20 million.

The 2018 Citywide Facilities Condition Assessment categorized more than 60% of buildings as in “poor” or “failing” condition, with an annual cost escalation rate estimated at 6–10%.

The absence of an integrated financial roadmap has resulted in cost inefficiencies and diminished public confidence. Berkeley's long-standing practice of episodic, reactive capital funding has inhibited the City's capacity to effectively address urgent infrastructure vulnerabilities and to plan for resilience-oriented modernization.

BACKGROUND

Numerous California municipalities—including San Francisco, Oakland, and San José—have successfully implemented coordinated fiscal strategies combining systematic bond issuance with active investment management and capital matching mechanisms. These jurisdictions have improved capital delivery while lowering financing costs and increasing access to competitive grants.

In contrast, Berkeley's recent experience with public bond measures underscores the need for clearer fiscal governance and improved public engagement:

- Measure T1 (2016): Authorized \$100 million in general obligation bonds. Although initially successful, several project components exceeded their original budgets due to planning and management challenges:
 - Strawberry Creek Park: 40% over budget due to unexpected subsurface conditions and underestimation of permitting costs.
 - Ohlone Park Renovations: Experienced project delays, contractor bid variability, and scope creep, resulting in a 25% cost increase from original estimates.
 - Willard Clubhouse: Required extensive ADA and systems upgrades not captured in initial scoping.
- These overruns stemmed from factors including inflationary pressures in construction markets, insufficient early-stage geotechnical assessments, evolving regulatory requirements, and staffing limitations in project management. Lack of contingency funding and rigid project timelines exacerbated these challenges, eroding community trust and highlighting the need for greater fiscal agility and programmatic transparency in future capital cycles.
- Measure L (2022): A \$650 million bond proposal for infrastructure investment failed to reach the two-thirds voter threshold. Analysts and civic groups—including the Berkeley Budget & Finance Policy Committee, the League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Berkeley Neighborhoods Council, and Berkeleyans for a Livable City—identified the following issues in post-election assessments:



BERKELEY CITY COUNCILMEMBER

TERRY TAPLÍN

DISTRICT 2

- Insufficient project prioritization and lack of transparency;
 - Poor public communication of long-term fiscal benefits;
 - Limited accountability frameworks following Measure T1;
 - Inadequate voter outreach and engagement.
- These critiques were substantiated in multiple forums. The Berkeley Budget & Finance Policy Committee published their concerns in meeting minutes from September 2022, highlighting a failure to articulate value to voters and the absence of a multi-year capital financing strategy. The League of Women Voters issued a position paper recommending improved fiscal transparency, while Berkeleyans for a Livable City conducted a comparative policy analysis drawing on best practices from Palo Alto and Emeryville. Collectively, these analyses underscore the need for a holistic fiscal strategy that integrates investment management with proactive capital financing.

RATIONALE

The integration of strategic bond issuance and modernized investment policy is essential to Berkeley's long-term fiscal health. These reforms will:

- Enhance the City's ability to execute capital projects on time and within budget;
- Reduce long-term liabilities and cost escalations associated with deferred maintenance;
- Maximize internal financing capacity and improve competitiveness in external funding rounds;
- Provide predictable financial planning horizons aligned with capital programming;
- Strengthen public confidence through greater transparency and fiscal discipline.

Strategically leveraging investment earnings via a matching grant fund is a forward-looking mechanism that turns financial efficiency into external revenue, magnifying the City's capital resources. This model aligns with both fiduciary best practices and intergovernmental funding paradigms that increasingly prioritize local match capacity.

Furthermore, comparative analysis of historical municipal bond service costs reveals that jurisdictions adhering to a consistent 6–10 year issuance schedule tend to stabilize borrowing costs, maintain high bond ratings, and secure favorable investor confidence. This layered approach to debt issuance and retirement avoids fiscal spikes, allows for transparent cash flow forecasting, and aligns debt service with infrastructure life cycles.

Based on peer practices and Berkeley's current assessed valuation growth, it is fiscally viable to issue a series of general obligation bonds totaling \$250–\$300 million over the next 25–30 years, without breaching responsible debt thresholds. Doing so would allow the City to systematically address its backlog of infrastructure liabilities, minimizing cost escalation due to delays and creating a financially resilient public capital framework.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Implementation costs may include consulting and legal services for policy drafting and portfolio reallocation. However, the long-term fiscal benefits include:

- Avoidance of inflation-driven capital cost increases;
- Greater access to grant programs requiring local matches of 20–50%;



- Higher returns on city investments through optimized strategies;
- Lower borrowing costs through well-timed bond issuances;
- Multiplicative gains in external revenue through matching mechanisms.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

Improved access to capital will support environmentally strategic projects including:

- Coastal flood resilience and shoreline restoration;
- Decarbonization of public buildings and fleet electrification;
- Sustainable stormwater management;
- Transit and multimodal infrastructure expansion.

A dedicated matching fund will allow the City to aggressively pursue funding from climate-focused programs such as FEMA’s BRIC, CalEPA Green Infrastructure Grants, and the California Resilience Challenge.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

- Maintain Status Quo: Fails to address growing infrastructure needs and rising costs.
- Ad Hoc Bond Measures: Inefficient, lacks transparency, and depends on unpredictable electoral outcomes.
- New Dedicated Tax Instruments: Politically complex and time-intensive with uncertain outcomes.

CONTACT PERSON

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Email: ttaplin@berkeleyca.gov

ATTACHMENTS

1. [FY 2025–2029 Capital Improvement Program \(CIP\)](#)
2. [City of Berkeley Investment Policy](#)
3. Berkeley Waterfront Specific Plan (Draft, November 2024)
4. [Measure T1 Bond Policies and Procedures Manual](#)
5. Measure L Bond Measure Information (November 2022)
6. Infrastructure Assessment Report (2021)
7. [Budget & Finance Committee Agenda Packet \(April 24, 2025\)](#)



BERKELEY CITY COUNCILMEMBER
TERRY TAPLÍN
DISTRICT 2

Measure L

Bond Measure

Shall the measure to create affordable housing; repair streets and sidewalks; underground utilities; and enhance buildings, infrastructure, and safety, authorizing the issuance of \$650 million in general obligation bonds, subject to independent oversight and audits, be adopted?

Financial Implications

Median annual cost over the projected 48-year period bonds are outstanding is approximately \$40.91 for every \$100,000 or \$265 for the average assessed home value of \$647,000; raising approximately \$25,000,000/year.

City Attorney's Impartial Analysis of Measure L

This measure was placed on the ballot by the City Council of the City of Berkeley ("City").

If the measure is approved by two-thirds of the electors voting on it, the City would be authorized to issue \$650 million of general obligation bonds to finance the acquisition and improvement of real property for affordable and social housing ("Affordable Housing Improvements") and public infrastructure and facilities ("Infrastructure Improvements") (collectively, the "Improvements").

For the Affordable Housing Improvements, proceeds of the bonds will be used to acquire or improve affordable and social housing either by the City directly or indirectly through third parties.

Proceeds of the bonds may be used to reimburse the City for amounts advanced from the general fund or other funds or accounts to pay for expenditures on the Improvements that are paid prior to the availability of bond proceeds.

The City may have the opportunity to leverage federal, state, county and regional funds allocated for the Improvements if it issues the bonds.

This measure includes financial accountability requirements to ensure that the expenditure of bond proceeds will be used for the purpose of financing Improvements and related costs. Financial accountability measures include an annual independent financial audit and annual oversight by an Affordable Housing and Infrastructure Bond Oversight Committee appointed by the City Council. In addition, the City Manager would be required to file an annual report with the City Council regarding the amount of bond funds collected and expended, as well as the status of the Improvements. Relevant City commissions would also make recommendations on projects and expenditures proposed to be funded by the bonds.

This measure provides that the maximum rate of interest to be paid on the bonds shall not exceed twelve percent (12%), though the prevailing interest rates could be less.

Financial Implications:

The bonds will be payable from ad valorem taxes levied on real property in the City of Berkeley. The City estimates that the median annual tax rate over the 48-year period that the bonds are projected to be outstanding would be approximately \$40.91 for every \$100,000 of assessed value, or \$265 for the average assessed home value of \$647,000. The City estimates that the average (mean) annual tax rate that would be required to be levied is approximately \$39 for every \$100,000 of assessed value. The City estimates that the highest tax rate that would be required to be levied is approximately \$71 per \$100,000 of assessed value, which the City projects will begin to apply in 2041-42.

The City estimates that the total debt service, including the principal and interest, that would be required to be repaid if all the bonds are issued and sold is \$1,125,000,000.

The above statement is an impartial analysis of Measure L.

s/FARIMAH FAIZ BROWN
Berkeley City Attorney

MEASURE TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE VOTERS AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF BERKELEY TO ISSUE GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS TO FINANCE THE ACQUISITION OR IMPROVEMENT OF REAL PROPERTY FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING, STREET AND SIDEWALK REPAIR, TRAFFIC SAFETY, UNDERGROUNDING OF UTILITIES, CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE, AND OTHER PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

Section 1. Title

This measure shall be known as the Affordable, Safe and Sustainable Berkeley Bond Act.

Section 2. Findings.

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley (the “City”) is committed to creating and maintaining an equitable, affordable, and resilient City with housing opportunities for all, safe and well-maintained infrastructure, and a public commons that welcomes and supports people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, the urgent need for affordable housing and preventing homelessness, the accelerating impacts of climate change, and aging public buildings and infrastructure create challenges for safety, equity, sustainability, and resilience; and

WHEREAS, the Berkeley City Council (the “City Council”) has identified critically needed investments in affordable housing; improved streets and sidewalks; green, vibrant, and well-maintained parks, streetscapes and other open spaces; pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements; public and historic buildings; recreational facilities, pools, and the waterfront; and above- and below-ground infrastructure as integral to protecting the quality of life for all Berkeleyans and to the City’s long-term vitality; and

WHEREAS, the City Council recognizes the existence of an acute housing crisis that has caused housing to become increasingly scarce, expensive, and out of reach for teachers, seniors, people with disabilities, students, veterans, the homeless, and for families and individuals with incomes at extremely low-, very low-, low-, and middle-income levels; and

WHEREAS, successful programs initiated in recent years have decreased overall homelessness in Berkeley, but estimates project there are still roughly 1,000 homeless people in the City on any given night; and

WHEREAS, providing affordable housing for low-income and unhoused persons is important to alleviate the housing crisis and reduce the impacts of unsheltered homelessness on our streets, parks, and other public spaces; and

WHEREAS, in November 2018, Berkeley voters overwhelmingly approved Measure O, authorizing the City to issue \$135 million dollars in general obligation bonds for the purpose of building and preserving affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, leveraging Measure O funds with County, State, and Federal dollars, the City has provided 20 affordable housing projects with pre-development or development funding, supporting the construction and rehabilitation of approximately 800 affordable housing units citywide; and

WHEREAS, in 2022 Berkeley's first Measure O-funded affordable housing projects opened their doors at 1601 Oxford Street in North Berkeley and 2012 Berkeley Way in the Downtown, welcoming seniors, working families, veterans, and formerly homeless individuals into new homes with on-site supportive services; and

WHEREAS, the pace of affordable housing production has exceeded expectations and all Measure O funds have been allocated through commitments to existing and pending affordable housing projects; and

WHEREAS, the Regional Housing Needs Allocation for the San Francisco Bay Area requires that Berkeley plan for and incentivize the production of over 3,800 affordable housing units over the next eight years, and current funding is insufficient to finance this volume of affordable homes; and

WHEREAS, funds available through this bond measure can support production of over 1,000 additional affordable housing units citywide, providing urgently needed housing for extremely low-, very low-, low-, and middle-income families and individuals, and helping the City achieve its goal of at least 10% reserved affordable housing citywide by 2030; and

WHEREAS, the City's *Vision 2050 Framework* and *Program Plan* are comprehensive plans to build, upgrade, and repair Berkeley's infrastructure and facilities to be more sustainable, safe, and resilient and to meet the needs of future generations, including addressing climate and environmental challenges; and

WHEREAS, much of Berkeley's public infrastructure was built over 75 years ago and is in need of refurbishment, modernization, and repair; and

WHEREAS, over \$1 billion dollars in infrastructure needs have been identified citywide, including improvements needed for street pavement, sidewalks, paths, and bikeways; bike, pedestrian and other traffic safety projects; undergrounding of utilities on evacuation routes; measures to reduce the risk and impacts of climate change, including flooding through stormwater and sea level rise; improvements to City parks, camps and pools, including a proposed pool at San Pablo Park; revitalization of Berkeley's historic Civic Center as a cultural and civic hub for the community; improvements to the Berkeley waterfront and pier; improvements to public buildings; measures to make the City's streetscapes and other public spaces more attractive, vibrant, and green; and other improvements to the City's infrastructure to make it more sustainable, enjoyable, and resilient; and

WHEREAS, in addition to hundreds of millions in infrastructure needs, the City has identified approximately \$248 million in necessary street repairs; and Berkeley's pavement condition is currently classified as "at risk" condition by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission; and failure to make urgently needed street repairs in a timely manner will result in the need for more costly repairs in the future; and

WHEREAS, building climate-resilient infrastructure, including undergrounding of utilities on evacuation routes and managing stormwater runoff and sea level rise, will reduce the risk of flooding, earthquakes and wildfires and make Berkeley a safer and more sustainable place to live; and

WHEREAS, in 2016 Berkeley voters overwhelmingly approved Measure T1, a \$100 million general obligation bond whose proceeds are being used to rehabilitate parks, infrastructure, and facilities citywide, including at the Frances Albrier Community Center, Live Oak Community Center, Strawberry Creek Park, Tom Bates Regional Sports Complex, Willard Park, George Florence Park, North Berkeley Senior Center, the Rose Garden, San Pablo Park, Harrison Park, the Marina, Aquatic Park, John Hinkel Park, King Pool, Grove Park, Civic Center Park, Ohlone Park, and Cazadero Camp; and at streets, sidewalks, storm drains, and other infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the full \$100 million of Measure T1 bond monies has already been allocated or committed to identified projects and the City has successfully leveraged regional, County, State, and Federal funds for these improvements, representing a significant gain for Berkeley; and

WHEREAS, to build on the success of projects funded through Measures O and T1 and to continue financing affordable housing and necessary improvements to facilities and infrastructure citywide, the City requires additional funds, which may be leveraged with regional, County, State, and Federal funds; and

WHEREAS, Section 7.64 of the Berkeley Municipal Code authorizes the City to issue general obligation bonds to finance the acquisition, construction, or completion of any municipal improvements and the acquisition, rehabilitation, preservation or construction of affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, the City is authorized to issue general obligation bonds pursuant to certain provisions of the California Government Code, including Article 1, commencing with Section 43600, of Chapter 4 of Division 4 of Title 4 or Article 4.5, commencing with Section 53506, of Chapter 3 of Part 1 of Division 2 of Title 5 (each, the "Bond Law"); and

WHEREAS, under the Bond Law and Chapter 7.64, the City intends to issue general obligation bonds (the "Bonds") to finance the acquisition or improvement of real property for affordable and social housing ("Affordable Housing Improvements"), including the application of bond proceeds by the City directly, or indirectly through third parties as loans, grants, or other disbursements to qualified individuals, not-for-profit entities acting alone or together with tax credit investors, not-for-profit corporations, partnerships,

associations, and government agencies, to acquire real property for the purpose of constructing, rehabilitating or preserving affordable and social housing, or to construct, rehabilitate or preserve affordable and social housing; including but not limited to newly constructed non-profit rental and ownership housing, supportive housing, and limited-equity housing cooperatives affiliated with community land trusts; and

WHEREAS, under the Bond Law and Chapter 7.64, the City further intends to issue the Bonds to finance the acquisition or improvement of real property for public infrastructure and facilities (“Infrastructure Improvements”; together with Affordable Housing Improvements, “Improvements”), including but not limited to the City’s streets (including pavement, traffic safety, pedestrian, accessibility, bicycle, and streetscape improvements), sidewalks and paths; public utilities, including the undergrounding of utilities on evacuation routes; parks, the waterfront and pier, and other natural and landscaped areas; pools, recreation, and senior facilities; camps; buildings; storm drains, streetscapes, and green infrastructure; civic, historic, and cultural sites; and other public open spaces, buildings, infrastructure, facilities, and amenities, including construction, repair, renovation, replacement, or reconstruction, so that the public can continue to benefit from safe, more sustainable, resilient, and enjoyable Infrastructure Improvements, and the Infrastructure Improvements will include any public art integrated into the Infrastructure Improvements consistent with Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 6.13; and

WHEREAS, funding from the Bonds should be guided by the City Council’s plans and policies, as may be amended from time to time, including the *Vision 2050 Framework and Program Plan* whose vision for a renewed City includes safe and enjoyable community facilities; safe and sustainable streets; resilient and climate-friendly infrastructure; and open space, parks, and recreation facilities that improve Berkeley’s quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the City Council recognizes the importance of ensuring adequate maintenance funding from existing sources for Infrastructure Improvements financed by the Bonds and not supplanting existing City infrastructure funding with proceeds of the Bonds; and

WHEREAS, the City Council through Resolution No. 70,456-N.S. has adopted a fiscal policy to allocate \$8 million annually in General Fund monies for street maintenance (the “Street Maintenance Funding Policy”), to be adjusted annually for inflation. The allocation is intended to augment the existing street paving budget of \$7.3 million, for a total street maintenance commitment of \$15.3 million annually, adjusted for inflation; and

WHEREAS, the Street Maintenance Funding Policy will help ensure that street maintenance is supported by adequate ongoing General Fund contributions as one-time infusions of paving resources provide only temporary improvement to pavement conditions, which deteriorate again without appropriate funding for maintenance; and

WHEREAS, the City’s plans and policies, including but not limited to the Vision 2050 Program Plan; pavement management system; and Transportation, Vision Zero, Bicycle,

and Pedestrian plans, as adopted or amended by the City Council from time to time, will guide how proceeds of the Bonds are spent; and

WHEREAS, fiscal accountability protections including public disclosure of all spending and annual independent audits and oversight will help ensure funds will be spent as promised; and

WHEREAS, by law, all funds must remain under local control in the City and cannot be taken away by the State, County, or Federal governments or used for other purposes; and

WHEREAS, this measure is adopted pursuant to and in conformance with Chapter 7.64 of the Berkeley Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has therefore determined that the public interest requires additional funding for the Improvements; and

WHEREAS, the People of the City of Berkeley find that the public interest requires the issuance of the Bonds in the amount of \$650,000,000 to fund the Improvements.

Section 3. Object and Purpose of Bonds.

This measure (the “Measure”) authorizes the issuance of general obligation bonds (the “Bonds”), the object and purpose of which is to finance, by the City of Berkeley or a third party, as applicable, the acquisition or improvement of real property for the Improvements.

The Improvements will be completed as needed, and each is assumed to include its share of costs, including planning, program management and construction costs. The final cost of each Improvement will be determined as real property is purchased, plans are finalized, construction bids are awarded, or projects are completed. In addition, certain acquisition or improvement funds are expected from sources other than proceeds of the Bonds, including funds which have not yet been secured. Therefore, the City Council cannot guarantee that the Bonds will provide sufficient funds to allow completion of all needed Improvements.

For the Affordable Housing Improvements, proceeds of the Bonds shall be used to finance the acquisition or improvement of real property for affordable and social housing, including the application of bond proceeds by the City directly, or indirectly through third parties as loans, grants, or other disbursements to qualified individuals, not-for-profit entities acting alone or together with tax credit investors, not-for-profit corporations, partnerships, associations, and government agencies, to acquire real property for the purpose of constructing, rehabilitating or preserving affordable housing, or to construct, rehabilitate or preserve affordable housing; including but not limited to newly constructed non-profit rental and ownership housing, supportive housing, and limited-equity housing cooperatives affiliated with community land trusts.

Proceeds of the Bonds may be used to reimburse the City for expenditures on the Improvements that are paid before the date of execution, delivery or issuance of the Bonds.

Section 4. Estimated Cost of Improvements.

The estimated cost of the Affordable Housing Improvements to be funded by the Bonds is \$200 million. The estimated cost for the Infrastructure Improvements is \$450 million, of which \$300 million may be allocated to Infrastructure Improvements related to street, sidewalk and traffic safety and \$150 million may be allocated to other Infrastructure Improvements, including those related to public safety and climate resiliency. These dollar amounts are estimates and are not a commitment or guarantee that any specific amounts will be spent on particular projects or categories of projects.

The estimated cost includes legal and other fees and the cost of printing the Bonds and other costs and expenses incidental to or connected with the authorization, issuance or sale of the Bonds. The cost of the Improvements includes planning, programs management and construction costs.

Section 5. Principal Amount of Bonds.

The aggregate principal amount of Bonds to be issued shall not exceed \$650 million.

Section 6. Maximum Interest Rate.

The maximum rate of interest to be paid on the Bonds shall not exceed the maximum interest rate permitted by law, in accordance with Government Code Section 53531.

Section 7. Accountability Requirements.

The following accountability measures apply to the issuance of Bonds pursuant to this Measure:

- A. The specific purpose of the Bonds is to finance the acquisition or improvement of real property for the Improvements; and
- B. The proceeds from the sale of the Bonds will be used only for the purposes specified in this Measure, and not for any other purpose; and
- C. The proceeds of the Bonds will be deposited into an account to be created and held by the City; and
- D. The proceeds from the sale of the Bonds may be used to reimburse the City for amounts advanced from the general fund or other funds or accounts to acquire real property for Improvements, when such purchases are made prior to the availability of Bond proceeds; and

- E. All funds received from any Bonds authorized by this Measure are subject to review, allocation, and approval by the City Council. At least annually, as part of the process to adopt a budget and any budget updates, the City Manager shall provide to the City Council a comprehensive report of funds received from any Bonds authorized by this Measure, of previous appropriations and expenditures of such funds, the status of the Improvements, and a proposal for expenditure of funds expected to be received from Bonds, if any, for review and approval by the City Council.
- F. The City Council shall appoint an Affordable Housing and Infrastructure Bond Oversight Committee which will provide oversight by reporting to the City Council on an annual basis regarding projects funded by the Bonds (as determined by the City Council) and whether those bond expenditures are consistent with the purposes of the Bonds set forth in this Measure.
- G. The following commissions or their successors shall make recommendations to the City Council on projects proposed to be funded by the Bonds and proposed expenditures of the proceeds of the Bonds:
 - 1. The Housing Advisory Commission shall be advisory to the City Council and shall provide recommendations on projects and expenditures for the Affordable Housing Improvements.
 - 2. The Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Commission shall be advisory to the City Council and shall provide recommendations on projects and expenditures for Infrastructure Improvements related to properties and facilities identified in Municipal Code Section 3.26.040.A, including all parks, recreation, and waterfront improvements.
 - 3. The Transportation and Infrastructure Commission shall be advisory to the City Council and shall provide recommendations on projects and expenditures for the Infrastructure Improvements related to transportation, traffic safety and other public infrastructure.
- H. All expenditures will be subject to an annual independent financial audit to confirm that Bond expenditures are consistent with the intent of this Measure.

TAX RATE STATEMENT

An election will be held in the City of Berkeley (the "City") on November 8, 2022, to authorize the sale of up to \$650 million in bonds of the City to finance the specific projects listed in the measure. If such bonds are authorized, the City expects to sell the bonds in one or more series. Principal and interest on the bonds will be payable solely from the proceeds of ad valorem tax levies made upon the taxable property in the City. The following information is provided in compliance with Sections 9400-9404 of the California Elections Code. Such information is based upon the best estimates and projections presently available from official sources, upon experience within the City, and other demonstrable factors.

Based upon the foregoing and projections of the City's assessed valuation:

1. The best estimate of the average annual tax rate that would be required to be levied to fund the bond issue over the entire duration of the bond debt service, based on a projection of assessed valuations available at the time of filing of this statement is 39 cents per \$100 (or \$39.00 per \$100,000) of assessed valuation of all property to be taxed. The best estimate of the final fiscal year in which the tax is anticipated to be collected is 2070/71. For purposes of this paragraph, the term "average annual tax rate" refers to the mean annual tax rate.
2. The best estimate of the highest tax rate that would be required to be levied to fund the bond issue, based on a projection of assessed valuations available at the time of filing this statement is 71 cents per \$100 (or \$71.00 per \$100,000) of assessed valuation of all property to be taxed. The best estimate of the first year in which the highest tax rate will apply is 2041/42.
3. The best estimate of the total debt service, including the principal and interest, that would be required to be repaid if all the bonds are issued and sold is \$1,125,000,000.

Voters should note that such estimated tax rates are specific to the repayment of bonds issued under this authorization and will be in addition to tax rates levied in connection with other bond authorizations approved or to be approved by the City or any other overlapping public agency.

Voters should note that the estimated tax rate is based on the ASSESSED VALUE of taxable property on Alameda County's official tax rolls, not on the property's market value. In addition, taxpayers eligible for a property tax exemption, such as the homeowner's exemption, will be taxed at a lower effective tax rate than described above. Property owners should consult their own property tax bills to determine their property's assessed value and any applicable tax exemptions.

Attention of all voters is directed to the fact that the foregoing information is based upon projections and estimates only, which amounts are not maximum amounts or durations and are not binding upon the City. The actual debt service amounts, tax rates and the years in which they will apply may vary from those presently estimated, due to variations from these estimates in the timing of bond sales, the amount of bonds sold and market interest rates at the time of each sale, and actual assessed valuations over the term of repayment of the bonds. The dates of sale and the amount of bonds sold at any given time will be determined by the City based on need for funds and other factors. The actual interest rates at which the bonds will be sold will depend on the bond market at the time of each sale. Actual future assessed valuation will depend upon the amount and value of taxable property within the City as determined by the Alameda County assessor in the annual assessment and the equalization process.

Dated: August 4, 2022

/s/ DEE WILLIAMS-RIDLEY
City Manager, City of Berkeley

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE L

Vote YES on Measure L! Join community leaders, neighbors, and a unanimous Mayor and City Council to invest in the safety, affordability, and wellbeing of our community.

Berkeley urgently needs to address housing affordability, the condition of our streets, and climate challenges impacting health, safety, and sustainability. To address these needs and support a vibrant and equitable future, Measure L provides funding to:

- Create over 1,500 affordable homes and continue rehousing the homeless
- Rehabilitate streets to good condition across every neighborhood
- Underground utility wires for safe evacuation from earthquakes and wildfires
- Reconstruct sidewalks, paths, the waterfront, and other public facilities
- Improve safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, seniors, and youth
- Revitalize our Civic Center buildings and Park
- Achieve a greener, more sustainable and resilient community.

Much of Berkeley's aging infrastructure is in disrepair. Recent bond measures have allowed us to start renewing parks, senior centers, and other facilities throughout Berkeley, and to help create and improve more than 750 affordable homes. But with close to \$1 billion in remaining needs, a State mandate for thousands more affordable units, and existing funds already committed or spent, we need Measure L to continue revitalizing our community.

Berkeley leverages your tax dollars with significant County, State, and Federal resources that can't be accessed without a "local match," and may be allocated to other cities. Delay can mean missing out on available funds, and greater future expense.

Measure L establishes an oversight committee, reporting requirements, and independent audits to ensure transparency, accountability, and that funds are spent as approved by voters. The City Council has already committed to increased funding for maintenance, so streets paved now won't deteriorate.

Let's take care of our community and invest in a vibrant future that meets the needs of all generations.

Vote YES on Measure L for a safe, affordable, green, and equitable Berkeley.

www.renewberkeley.org

s/Nancy Skinner
State Senator

s/Jesse Arreguín
Berkeley Mayor

s/Loni Hancock
Former State Senator and Berkeley Mayor

s/Susan Wengraf
Berkeley City Councilmember

s/Gordon Wozniak
Chair: Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Commission

REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE L

Measure L proponents promise an eye-catching list of projects, but the reality is quite different.

There's no guarantee we'll get the touted results because this bond is not tied to any specific project list. Future Councils will have the freedom to spend much of this money however they want with limited guardrails, including on vanity projects like new Council chambers as has been proposed! Previous bonds we have supported had community consensus on projects and goals *before* being submitted to the voters. How can an oversight committee hold Council accountable when no specific plans or promises have been made?

Many of the important goals of Measure L are already being funded by recently approved measures (O, P, M, T1, FF) that have generated hundreds of millions of dollars and are still being paid off. We need a clear accounting of what these measures have accomplished and why another will succeed where they have not. No such transparency exists here.

Funding for street maintenance was only recently increased after years of spending less than ~1% on streets from our ~\$550 million annual budget! After a decade of underfunding, this increase was cynically made to help sell this bond. A small parcel tax combined with a greater contribution from the annual general budget would fix our streets in only 10 years.

We are happy to pay for Berkeley's needed improvements. But we want planning, accountability, and good faith. We see none of these in Measure L.

Vote No on Measure L

BerkeleyansForBetterPlanning.org

s/Jim McGrath

Former Parks, Waterfront, Public Works and BCDC Commissioner

s/Nancy Rader

Disaster and Fire Safety Commissioner

s/Stephanie Allan

Career Technical Education Educator

s/Carla Woodworth
Former Berkeley City Councilmember

s/Margot W. Smith
Activist

ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE L

We strongly support funding for affordable housing, roads, and other infrastructure needs. But this vague measure is a blank check to City Hall, with little assurance that this massive bond would be spent effectively.

The measure's flaws:

- **Poor planning.** There are no plans or specific projects for many of the funds that the bond would generate. Careful planning is necessary to efficiently achieve the measure's stated goals and should be completed in advance of a bond request. The city's general fund has increased 60% since 2013 with little of that increase dedicated to infrastructure. Infrastructure should have significant budget contributions from the general fund, not be largely outsourced to our children as debt. Many of the bond's goals do not warrant a 45-year liability. Paying it off could strangle other future bond needs, such as for our schools.
- **Few priorities or commitments.** A laundry list of projects fails to prioritize our greatest needs. There is no clear priority for low-income affordable housing, for example. The electorate deserves separate, carefully considered measures to vote on. This hodge-podge cynically attempts to gain votes based on a favored element of the grab bag. It suggests more projects than can be funded and commits to few.
- **No accountability.** In hastily adopting this bond measure, the city bypassed its commissions and public input. Citizen oversight has been spotty in the past and is far from assured here. Future City Councils could use at least \$150 million of this bond for almost anything.

Achieving vital goals requires more than money. It requires planning, prioritization, and accountability that has been lacking.

Limited opportunities to raise bond funds must not be squandered. Vote "No" on Measure L. Tell City Hall to come back in two years with careful planning, real commitments, and lower borrowing costs.

BerkeleyansForBetterPlanning.com

s/Ruth Ann "Kelly" Hammargren
Activist, Artist, Writer

s/Jack Kurzweil
Professor (Emeritus) of Electrical Engineering, San Jose State Univ.

s/James McGrath
Former Bay Conservation and Development, Public Works and Parks Commissioner

s/Laurie Capitelli
Former City Councilmember

s/Shirley Dean
Former Berkeley Mayor

REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE L

Even Measure L's opponents agree: Berkeley needs affordable housing, streets in good condition, and upgrades to critical facilities and infrastructure.

It's time to take action and revitalize Berkeley for the 21st Century!

Measure L is the product of four years of planning and community input. It lists specific priorities and projects and requires the most robust accountability of any current City tax measure. Delay means more displacement, deterioration, and higher future costs.

- Berkeley's Housing Trust Fund provides the affordable housing framework Measure L will use to increase housing for low-income and homeless residents.
- In 2018, 84% of voters supported development of Vision 2050, a 30-year guide for climate-smart, technologically-advanced infrastructure. The Vision 2050 Program Plan will guide the improvements Measure L funds.
- Our pavement conditions were evaluated by independent consultants and the City Auditor. The City already has a Pedestrian Master Plan, Undergrounding Study, and Complete Streets Policy as well as numerous other plans, reports, and policies that inform Measure L.

Measure L creates accountability including a single-purpose Oversight Committee, requires independent audits and reporting, and citizen commissions to recommend and oversee projects. All funding decisions are made by the City Council in open session.

Bonds are a responsible and effective way to fund affordable housing and infrastructure. Projects can be done quickly with repayments spread over many years, reducing yearly costs to residents. While the Council is making significant contributions to infrastructure including funding streets, Measure L is needed to address roughly \$1 Billion in unfunded infrastructure needs.

Join us in voting **YES on Measure L** for a safe, vibrant, diverse, and resilient future.

For more information: www.renewberkeley.org.

s/Igor A. Tregub
Chair, Sierra Club Northern Alameda County Group

s/Ann-Marie Hogan
Retired Berkeley City Auditor

s/Shashi Jivan
Board Member, East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO)

s/Terry Taplin
Berkeley City Councilmember, District 2

s/Sophie Hahn
City Councilmember, District 5

Measure M

Vacancy Tax

Shall the measure to tax property owners who keep residential units vacant more than 182 days per year, \$3,000 for each nonexempt condominium, duplex, single family dwelling, or townhouse vacant unit in the first year, increasing to \$6,000 for each subsequent year, and \$6,000 for all other residential units vacant in the first year, increasing to \$12,000 for each subsequent year, with exceptions, from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2034, generating between \$3,900,000 and \$5,900,000 annually, be adopted?

City Attorney's Impartial Analysis of Measure M

This measure was placed on the ballot by the City Council.

This measure would create a tax on property owners who keep a residential unit vacant for more than a total of 182 days in a calendar year. The tax would be imposed on owners at the following rates:

- For residential units in duplexes, condominiums, single-family homes and townhouses, the tax would be \$3,000 for the first year a unit is vacant, and increase to \$6,000 for any subsequent year a unit remains vacant.
- For all other residential units, the tax would be \$6,000 for the first year the unit is vacant, and increase to \$12,000 for any subsequent year the unit remains vacant.

These rates would be adjusted annually by the increase in the Consumer Price Index for the San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose area.

A residential unit would not be counted as vacant during any of the following periods that it is unoccupied, uninhabited or unused:

- The period during which a building permit application is pending with the City, for up to one year
- The two-year period after a building permit is issued for repair or rehabilitation of the unit
- The two-year period after a unit is made uninhabitable or unusable due to fire, natural disaster or other catastrophic event
- The period that the unit is the owner's principal residence
- The period that the unit is leased for occupancy
- The period that a unit is vacant following the death of the owner who occupied the unit, for up to two years or until the end of probate, whichever is longer
- The period that a unit is vacant because the occupant is in a hospital or care facility

The following property owners would be exempt from this tax:

- 501(c)(3) organizations
- State or local governmental entities

- An individual or trust who owns a single property that has four or fewer residential units, who uses the property as their primary residence, and who owns no other residential units in the City. This exemption would not apply to real estate investment trusts, corporations, or limited liability companies.

The measure would allow the City Council to suspend the tax by a two-thirds vote in the event of a declared emergency. The measure would allow the City Council to amend the tax by a simple majority vote, provided the Council does not change the amount of the tax or expand any exemptions. State law also prevents City Council from narrowing any exemptions.

Property owners would be subject to this tax beginning January 1, 2024 until December 31, 2034.

The tax is estimated to generate \$3,900,000 to \$5,900,000 annually. The City Manager would provide City Council an annual report of revenues collected during the prior fiscal year.

This is a general tax. The revenue from this tax would be deposited into the general fund and could be used for any municipal purpose.

This measure requires a simple majority vote for passage.

The above statement is an impartial analysis of Measure M.

s/FARIMAH FAIZ BROWN
Berkeley City Attorney

ORDINANCE NO. #,###-N.S.

ADDING CHAPTER 7.54 TO THE BERKELEY MUNICIPAL CODE TO IMPOSE AN
EXCISE TAX ON KEEPING RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY VACANT TO FUND GENERAL
MUNICIPAL SERVICES

BE IT ORDAINED by the people of the City of Berkeley as follows:

Section 1. That Chapter 7.54 of the Berkeley Municipal Code is added to read as follows:

Chapter 7.54

Empty Homes Tax

Sections:

7.54.010 Short Title.

7.54.020 Findings and Purpose.

7.54.030 Definitions.

7.54.040 Imposition of Tax.

7.54.050 Returns; Presumption of Vacancy.

7.54.060 Exemptions.

7.54.070 Administration; Penalties.

7.54.080 Use of Funds for General Municipal Purposes.

7.54.090 Technical Assistance to the City Manager; Annual Reports.

7.54.100 Authorization and Limitation on Issuance of Bonds.

7.54.110 Severability.

7.54.120 Savings Clause.

7.54.130 Liberal Construction.

7.54.010 Short Title.

This Chapter shall be known as the "Empty Homes Tax Ordinance," and the tax it imposes shall be known as the "Empty Homes Tax."

7.54.020 Findings and purpose.

The People of the City of Berkeley find and declare as follows:

A. Residential vacancies are an ongoing concern in Berkeley.

B. Of total vacancies, the Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board data from 2022 indicates that 1,128 fully or partially regulated units in buildings with more than two units have been classified by their owners as not available to rent. Returning these and other vacant units to the housing market is a key strategy for ensuring long-term affordability.

C. Prolonged vacancy restricts the supply of available housing units, is often the result of housing speculation and runs counter to the City's housing objectives. Prolonged vacancies can also decrease economic activity in neighborhoods and lead to blight.

D. The housing affordability crisis has created an urgent need to pay for additional services and programs including, but not limited to, construction of new affordable housing for households with a household income of 80% or less of Area Median Income,

including by providing pre-development funding to non-profit affordable housing developers, and the acquisition and rehabilitation of multi-unit buildings for affordable housing, and the operation of such buildings acquired and/or rehabilitated.

E. The City is also working to ensure all public funds available to build affordable housing are being maximized, from the City, Alameda County, State and Federal governments.

F. Even with the addition of City, County, State, and Federal resources, the City is unable to house all of its residents.

G. The increased costs of meeting the challenges of the housing crisis have impacted the City's General Fund.

H. The City needs new funds to pay for municipal services. The Empty Homes Tax is intended to disincentivize prolonged vacancies and housing speculation, thereby increasing the number of housing units available for occupancy, while also raising funds for municipal services, including but not limited to constructing, acquiring, and rehabilitating affordable housing.

7.54.030 Definitions.

Unless otherwise defined in this Chapter, the terms used in this Chapter shall have the meanings given to them in Chapters 2.44 and 9.04 of the Municipal Code, as amended from time to time. For purposes of this Chapter, the following definitions shall apply:

A. "Affiliate" means an entity under common majority ownership or common control, whether that ownership or control is direct or indirect, with any other person or entity, including but not limited to a person or entity that majority owns or controls, or is majority owned or controlled by, any other person or entity.

B. "Building Permit Application Period" means the period following the date that an application for a building permit for repair, rehabilitation, or construction with respect to a Residential Unit is filed with the City through the date the Planning Department or its successor agency grants or denies that application, not to exceed one year.

Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, if more than one building permit application is filed by or on behalf of one or more persons in the Owner's Group for the same Residential Unit, the Building Permit Application Period shall mean only the applicable period following the date the first application is filed with the City by or on behalf of anyone in the Owner's Group. In the case of an owner qualifying for the Disaster Period in subsection D, the Building Permit Application Period may be extended beyond one year if the owner makes a good faith effort, as determined by the building official, to obtain a building permit.

C. "Disaster Period" means the two-year period following the date that a Residential Unit was made uninhabitable or unusable due to fire, natural disaster, or other catastrophic event, except where a negligent, reckless or willful act or omission by the owner or agent of the owner contributed to or caused the Residential Unit to become uninhabitable or unusable due to fire, natural disaster or other catastrophic event.

D. "Homeowners' Exemption Period" means the period during which a Residential Unit is the principal place of residence of any owner of that Residential Unit and for which

such owner validly has claimed either the homeowners' property tax exemption under Section 218 of the California Revenue and Taxation Code or the disabled veterans' exemption under Section 205.5 of that Code, as those sections may be amended from time to time.

E. "Hotel" means any property registered under Section 7.36.060 of the Municipal Code and excludes any properties regulated under Chapter 23.314 of the Municipal Code.

F. "Lease Period" means the period during which any owner of a Residential Unit or any person in the Owner's Group of that owner leases that Residential Unit to one or more tenants under a bona fide lease intended for occupancy, but not including any lease or rental of that Residential Unit to anyone in the Owner's Group or to travelers, vacationers, or other transient occupants.

G. "Owner Death Period" means, with respect to a co-owner or decedent's estate, heirs, or beneficiaries, the period during which a Residential Unit is unoccupied, uninhabited, or unused because of the death of any owner of a Residential Unit who was the sole occupant of that Residential Unit immediately prior to such owner's death, provided that such period shall not exceed the longer of two years or the period during which the Residential Unit is subject to the authority of a probate court.

H. "Owner In Care Period" means the period during which a Residential Unit is unoccupied, uninhabited, or unused because the occupant of the Residential Unit who used that Residential Unit as their principal residence is residing in a hospital, long term or supportive care facility, medical care or treatment facility, or other similar facility.

I. "Owner's Group" means for each owner of a Residential Unit, with respect to each Residential Unit, the owner, any current or former co-owner, and any Related Person or Affiliate of the owner or any current or former co-owner.

J. "Rehabilitation Period" means the two-year period following the date that the City issues a building permit for repair, or rehabilitation, with respect to a Residential Unit, provided that if the City issues multiple building permits to or for the benefit of one or more persons in the Owner's Group for the same Residential Unit, the Rehabilitation Period shall mean only the two-year period following the issuance of the first building permit to or for the benefit of anyone in the Owner's Group.

K. "Related Person" means a spouse, domestic partner, child, parent, or sibling.

L. "Residential Unit" means a house, an apartment, a group of rooms, or a single room that is designed as separate living quarters. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live and eat separately from any other persons in the building and which have a kitchen and direct access from the outside of the building or through a common hall. For purposes of this Chapter, a Residential Unit shall not include a unit in a Hotel, a currently operational nursing home, residential care facility, or other similar facility, or any unit that is fully exempt from property tax under the welfare exemption under Section 214(g) of the California Revenue and Taxation Code, as may be amended from time to time.

M. "Vacancy Exclusion Period" means the Building Permit Application Period, Rehabilitation Period, Disaster Period, Homeowners' Exemption Period, Lease Period, Owner Death Period, or Owner In Care Period.

N. "Vacant" means unoccupied, uninhabited, or unused, for more than 182 days, whether consecutive or nonconsecutive, in a calendar year.

7.54.040 Imposition of Tax.

A. Except as otherwise provided in this Chapter, the City imposes an annual Empty Homes Tax on each person that owns a Residential Unit for keeping that Residential Unit Vacant for more than 182 days, whether consecutive or nonconsecutive, in a calendar year except for those periods defined as a Vacancy Exclusion Period.

B. The Empty Homes Tax on an owner keeping a Residential Unit Vacant shall be as follows:

1. For the first calendar year that the Residential Unit is Vacant, the tax shall be \$3,000 per Residential Unit in a vacant condominium, duplex, single family dwelling, or townhouse unit under separate residential unit ownership and \$6,000 per any other vacant Residential Unit.
2. For the second consecutive calendar year and each subsequent calendar year thereafter that the Residential Unit is Vacant, the tax shall be \$6,000 per Residential Unit in a vacant condominium, duplex, single family dwelling, or townhouse unit under separate residential unit ownership and \$12,000 per any other vacant Residential Unit.

C. The rates set forth in subsection B. of this Section shall be adjusted annually in accordance with the increase in the Consumer Price Index: All Urban Consumers for the San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose Area for All Items as reported by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, or any successor to that index, as of December 31st of the preceding year, beginning with the 2025 calendar year.

D. The Empty Homes Tax shall be payable by the owner or owners of the Residential Unit kept Vacant. Not more than one tax per Residential Unit shall be imposed under this Section for a calendar year by reason of multiple liable owners. If there are multiple liable owners, each owner shall be jointly and severally liable for the tax, which shall be the highest amount of tax payable by any owner for that Residential Unit for that calendar year.

E. In determining whether an owner has kept a Residential Unit Vacant during a calendar year, days within any Vacancy Exclusion Period shall be disregarded if that Vacancy Exclusion Period applies to that owner for that Residential Unit, as shall days in which the Residential Unit was not owned by the owner, but the owner shall be deemed to have kept the Residential Unit unoccupied, uninhabited, or unused on all other days that such Residential Unit is unoccupied, uninhabited, or unused during the calendar year.

F. The Empty Homes Tax shall take effect on January 1, 2024. The Empty Homes Tax shall expire on December 31, 2034, unless reauthorized by the voters prior to such date.

G. The Empty Homes Tax shall be suspended for as long as the Berkeley COVID-19 Residential Eviction Moratorium is in effect pursuant to BMC 13.110 and the tax shall resume upon expiration.

H. Upon declaring a citywide emergency, the Council may suspend the tax in whole or part by a supermajority vote of two-thirds of the entire City Council upon a finding that a declared emergency has undermined the ability of owners to fill vacancies in their Residential Units. Such a suspension shall last for no more than 60 days from its enactment by the Council, but may be extended on or before its expiration by a two-thirds supermajority vote of the Council so long as the emergency continues and the required findings can be made. The Empty Homes Tax shall resume upon the expiration of the emergency.

I. The Council may, by majority vote of the entire City Council, amend this Chapter in furtherance of its purposes or to correct ambiguities or errors in language, provided that such amendments do not alter the dollar amounts of the tax as provided in Section 7.54.040 B, or expand the applicability of the exemptions in Section 7.54.060, or amend subsection H. or this subsection I. of Section 7.54.040.

7.54.050 Returns; Presumption of Vacancy.

A. Each person that is required to pay the Empty Homes Tax shall file a return in the form and manner prescribed by the City Manager or their designee.

B. Each person that owns a Residential Unit at any time during a calendar year and that is not exempt from the Empty Homes Tax with respect to that Residential Unit under any one of subsections A. through D. of Section 7.54.060 shall file a return for that calendar year in the form and manner prescribed by the City Manager or their designee. A person that fails to file the return required by this subsection B. for a Residential Unit shall be presumed to have kept that Residential Unit Vacant for the calendar year for which such return is required. The person who fails to file the required return may rebut the presumption by producing satisfactory evidence that such person did not keep the Residential Unit Vacant during the calendar year for which the return is required.

7.54.060 Exemptions.

A. For only so long as and to the extent that the City is prohibited by the Constitution or laws of the State of California or the Constitution or laws of the United States from imposing the Empty Homes Tax on any person that person shall be exempt from the Empty Homes Tax.

B. Any organization that is exempt from income taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, shall be exempt from the Empty Homes Tax.

C. The City, the State of California, and any county, municipal corporation, district, or other political subdivision of the State shall be exempt from the Empty Homes Tax, except where any constitutional or statutory immunity from taxation is waived or is not applicable.

D. A natural person or trust who is the owner of a single property of four or fewer Residential Units, inclusive of accessory dwelling units and junior accessory dwelling units, that is their principal residence shall be exempt provided that they own no other Residential Units in the City. Additionally, for the purposes of this subsection D. only, the

“owner” of such Rental Property shall not be any of the following set forth under California Civil Code Section 1947.12(d)(5)(A)(i)-(iii) (“AB 1482”): a real estate investment trust, as defined in Section 856 of the Internal Revenue Code; a corporation; or a limited liability company.

E. Any taxpayer seeking an exemption under this Section shall be required to demonstrate their entitlement thereto annually by submitting an application and supporting documentation to the City Manager or their designee in the manner and at the time established in regulations and/or guidelines hereafter promulgated by the City Manager subject to review by the City Council in its discretion. Such applications shall be on forms provided by the City Manager, or their designee.

7.54.070 Administration; Penalties

A. The City Manager or their designee shall enforce the provisions of this Chapter and may prescribe, adopt, and enforce rules and regulations relating to the administration and enforcement of this chapter.

B. The tax required by this Chapter is delinquent if not received by the tax administrator on or before February 28 of each year.

C. Any person who fails to pay the tax required by this Chapter to the City or any amount of tax required to be collected and paid to the City within the time required shall pay a penalty of ten percent of the tax or amount of the tax, in addition to the tax or amount of tax, plus interest at the rate of one percent per month from the date on which the tax or the amount of tax required to be collected became due and payable to the City until the date of payment.

D. Transactions with the principal purpose of avoiding or evading all or a portion of the Empty Homes Tax shall be disregarded for purposes of determining the amount of the Empty Homes Tax and whether the Empty Homes Tax is due. Any owner determined to have engaged in one or more transactions with the principal purpose of avoiding or evading all or a portion of the Empty Homes Tax shall be liable for the Empty Homes Tax and also liable for a penalty in an amount equal to the Empty Homes Tax.

E. Any tax required to be paid by an owner under the provisions of this chapter shall be deemed a debt owed by the owner to the City. Any person owing money to the City under the provisions of this chapter shall be liable to an action brought in the name of the City for the recovery of such amount, along with any collection costs incurred by the City as a result of the person’s noncompliance with this chapter, including, but not limited to, reasonable attorneys’ fees, plus interest and penalties as herein provided.

7.54.080 Use of Funds for General Municipal Purposes.

A. The Council may deposit any portion of the proceeds generated by the Empty Homes Tax into the Housing Trust Fund, subject to its operating rules, or it may use any of the proceeds to fund any general municipal services designated by the Council.

7.54.090 Annual Reports.

Commencing with a report filed no later than February 15, 2026, covering the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, the City Manager shall file annually with the Council, by February 15 of each year, a report containing the amount of monies collected from the tax during the prior fiscal year.

7.54.100 Authorization and Limitation on Issuance of Bonds.

The City shall be authorized to pledge revenues generated by the Empty Homes Tax to the repayment of limited tax bonds or other forms of indebtedness authorized under this Section. The Council shall by ordinance or resolution, as applicable, establish the terms of any limited tax bonds or other forms of indebtedness authorized hereby, including but not limited to, the amount of the issue, date, covenants, denominations, interest rate or rates, maturity or maturities, redemption rights, tax status, manner of sale, and such other particulars as are necessary or desirable.

7.54.110 Severability.

If any word, phrase, sentence, part, section, subsection, or other portion of this ordinance, or any application thereof to any person or circumstance is declared void, unconstitutional, or invalid for any reason, then such word, phrase, sentence, part, section, subsection, or other portion, or the prescribed application thereof, shall be severable, and the remaining provisions of this chapter, and all applications thereof, not having been declared void, unconstitutional or invalid, shall remain in full force and effect. The People of the City of Berkeley hereby declare that they would have passed this ordinance, and each section, subsection, sentence, clause and phrase thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses or phrases had been declared invalid or unconstitutional.

7.54.120 Savings Clause.

No section, clause, part, or provision of this Chapter shall be construed as requiring the payment of any tax that would be in violation of the Constitution or laws of the United States or of the Constitution or laws of the State of California.

7.54.130 Liberal Construction.

This Chapter shall be liberally construed to effectuate its purpose.

Section 2. Increase Appropriations Limit. Pursuant to California Constitution Article XIII B and applicable laws, for four years from November 8, 2022, the appropriations limit for the City shall be increased by the aggregate sum collected by the levy of the general tax imposed under this ordinance.

Section 3. California Environmental Quality Act Requirements. This Ordinance is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq., under, including without limitation, Public Resources Code section 21065

and CEQA Guidelines sections 15378(b)(4) and 15061(b)(3), as it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity authorized herein may have a significant effect on the environment and pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080, subdivision (b)(8), and CEQA Guidelines section 15273 as the approval of government revenues to fund existing services.

Section 4. General Tax; Majority Vote Requirement. This Ordinance imposes a general tax for general revenue purposes and shall be effective only if approved by a majority of the voters voting thereon.

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE M

Vote YES on Measure M to bring needed housing back online and ensure speculators pay for the impacts of long-term vacancies.

The lack of available and affordable housing impacts the safety, diversity, and quality of life in our city. Rising rents fuel displacement of long-term residents, push people into overcrowded living conditions, and increase homelessness, impacting our streets, parks, and public spaces.

While the City is building new housing, some corporate speculators and scofflaws keep units and even entire apartment buildings empty during an extreme housing shortage. Long-term vacancies artificially restrict the supply and create blight in neighborhoods.

An important strategy to increase our housing supply now is unlocking the over 1,000 empty homes currently vacant. Measure M, the Empty Homes Tax, discourages property owners from keeping units vacant with an annual tax of \$3,000 on empty condos, duplexes, and single-family homes not used as someone's primary residence and \$6,000 for all other empty units. The tax increases progressively based on the length of vacancy. Estimated to generate up to \$5.9 million annually, Measure M can provide general funds for building and preserving affordable housing.

Measure M targets corporate landlords and owners of large or multiple properties, and includes exemptions to avoid burdening small property owners. Homeowners can hold a unit open for a child returning from college and or a caregiver as they grow older, and vacant units on small properties can be used by the owner. This is in addition to probate, construction, and disaster recovery exemptions. The tax doesn't go into effect until January 1, 2024, giving property owners significant time to comply.

Endorsers include the Alameda County Democratic Party, Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club, the Bay Area Community Land Trust, Cal Berkeley Democrats, SEIU 1021, Berkeley Citizens Action, the Berkeley Progressive Alliance, and Telegraph for People.

We can make housing available now and improve quality of life by encouraging housing to be rented. Vote YES on the Empty Homes Tax.

s/Jesse Arreguin
Mayor of Berkeley

s/Kate Harrison
Berkeley Vice Mayor and Councilmember

s/Rigel Robinson
Berkeley City Councilmember

s/Ben Bartlett
Berkeley City Councilmember

REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE M

There must be a reason why nearly half of City Council did not vote to put this measure on the ballot.

- Perhaps it's because they knew that Measure M would create a tremendous burden on City Staff at a time when their focus should be on providing essential city services.
- Perhaps it's because they knew that revenue projections for this tax were grossly overestimated and that any money which MIGHT be generated is not earmarked for affordable housing.
- Perhaps it's because they knew that some of Measure M's endorsers would soon be calling for the repeal of exemptions for single-family homeowners and small property owners.
- Perhaps it's because they knew that in the rare instance the tax was paid by a corporate owner it would simply be tacked on to the sale price of the property, making housing even more unaffordable in Berkeley.
- Perhaps it's because they know that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has estimated the vacancy rate in our area to be an already low 3.4%, and even a quick internet search will show that driving the rate down further will result in drastically higher rents for tenants.

Berkeleyans must ask more from their elected officials. Rather than pay lip service to the affordable housing crisis, supporters should take the time to analyze whether a vacancy tax will do more harm than good. The rushed manner in which this was placed on the ballot is evidence that they have not.

Please Vote NO on Measure M.

s/Marcus Crawley
President, Alameda County Taxpayers' Association

ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE M

There is no doubt that we are in a housing crisis, but Measure M is a classic example of a solution looking for a problem. **That's because there is no solid data showing an actual vacancy problem in the City of Berkeley.**

Proponents used 2020 Census data to support this measure, but vacancies that year were inflated as thousands of students abandoned their apartments when the University closed its campus due to the pandemic. **Using 2020 Census data to make a case for this tax wasn't just negligent, it was downright wrong.**

In addition to lacking data, the measure was rushed to the ballot without moving through the City Council committee process. As such, City Council was forced making last minute decisions without thoroughly vetting revenue projections or unintended consequences. There is a very real possibility that this tax will cost more money to administer than it makes. **That could ultimately mean less money for essential city services and affordable housing in Berkeley.**

The measure also doesn't include an appeal process for homeowners that are taxed incorrectly. Instead, supporters say that City Staff is responsible for creating this process along with a complicated set of regulations to administer and levy the tax. **Not only does this deprive Berkeley Voters of a say in how the tax is administered, it creates a huge burden on City Staff who are already stretched thin.** City Staff should be focusing on providing essential city services and creating real affordable housing solutions rather than wasting tax dollars on bringing a handful of expensive apartments to market.

Lastly, there is already talk of **repealing exemptions for single-family homeowners and small property owners.** **Even if you're safe now, you won't be very soon.**

Vote NO on Measure M.

s/Marcus Crawley
President, Alameda County Taxpayers' Association

REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE M

While it may be profitable for property owners to leave units empty, it is very expensive for the community and for those unable to find housing.

Unlike the Census' 4,725 vacant units cited by those opposing the tax, the City's robust database of 1,128 units classified as 'not available to rent' is not a snapshot in time. It is a definitive record of landlords **permanently removing their units from the market**, artificially reducing the supply of housing and exacerbating already high rents and displacement. It is this figure that the City used to estimate the number of units that could be once again available as housing and the revenues to be realized from the tax.

Measure M was carefully drafted for more than half a year and was informed by extensive data analysis, consultation with other jurisdictions, City Finance and the City Attorney and months of public input and debate. The authors listened diligently to the public, crafting thoughtful exemptions, and empowering the Council to make minor amendments that don't increase the tax or the types of units to which the tax applies.

Tax administration will be smooth and cost-effective due to the City's existing dataset and rental regulations, leaving millions of additional dollars to provide essential city services or build affordable housing. The Measure also empowers the City to create an appeals process through regulations – a routine process.

Let's restore missing housing units and reduce blight. **Join us in voting YES on the Empty Homes Tax.**

s/Igor A. Tregub
Chair, Sierra Club Northern Alameda County Group

s/Andy Kelley
Corresponding Secretary, Alameda County Democratic Party

s/Leah Simon-Weisberg
Chair of the Berkeley Rent Board

s/Chris Schildt
Chair, Berkeley Housing Authority Board

s/Cecilia Lunaparra
President, Cal Berkeley Democrats

Measure N

Article 34

Low-Income Housing

Shall any federal, state or local public entity be empowered to develop, construct or acquire an additional 3,000 units of low-rent housing in the City of Berkeley for persons of low income?

Financial Implications:

Uncertain, dependent on means of financing used.

**CITY ATTORNEY ANALYSIS
MEASURE FOR AUTHORIZATION OF LOW RENT HOUSING**

This measure was placed on the ballot by the City Council.

Article XXXIV of the California Constitution requires that a City's voters grant prior approval before any federal, state or local public entity can develop, construct or acquire certain types of low rent (below market rate) housing projects in that City. Berkeley citizens have voted to approve the development of 200 units of housing for low income persons in 1977, 300 units in 1981, 500 units in 2000, and 500 units in 2016.

Since 2016, 242 units of housing subject to Article XXXIV has been developed in the City, and the City is anticipating the construction of a significant number of additional units in the next few years. Thus, additional voter authorization is required in order to develop additional units which are subject to Article XXXIV referendum requirements.

The proposed measure would authorize any public entity to develop, construct or acquire an additional 3,000 units of low income housing in the City of Berkeley for low income persons.

This measure grants only general authority for units to be developed, constructed or acquired and does not approve any individual project. All projects subject to this grant of authority would be required to comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws including land use, housing and building requirements.

Financial Implications

The financial implications of any specific housing project depends on the particular method of financing of that project. The financial implications are unknown at this time.

s/FARIMAH FAIZ BROWN
Berkeley City Attorney

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

AUTHORIZING PUBLIC ENTITIES TO DEVELOP, CONSTRUCT, OR ACQUIRE NO MORE THAN 3,000 UNITS OF LOW RENT HOUSING IN THE CITY OF BERKELEY

WHEREAS, Article XXXIV of the Constitution of California requires that a majority of qualified voters of the City of Berkeley determine whether or not any public entity should be empowered to develop, construct, or acquire low rent housing projects in the City of Berkeley.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the People of the City of Berkeley that any public entity shall be empowered to develop, construct or acquire up to 3,000 additional units of low-rent housing for persons of low income in the City of Berkeley.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the terms of the authorization contained in this measure shall be construed in the same manner as Article XXXIV of the Constitution of California and any laws or cases interpreting that section.

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE N

Vote YES on Measure N. Placed on the ballot by a unanimous City Council and Mayor, Measure N enables the City of Berkeley to develop, construct or acquire up to 3,000 units of low-income housing.

Housing is a human right. Yet, our community faces a critical shortage of homes affordable to seniors, persons with disabilities, veterans, students, and working families. Rising rents and home prices continue to lock people out of the housing market and fuel displacement, and while recent efforts have decreased homelessness, more affordable homes are needed to meet the demand for affordable and supportive housing.

Article XXXIV of the California Constitution requires that voters grant prior approval before any federal, state, or local public entity develops or acquires below-market-rate housing. While the City does not build affordable units directly, we provide funding to non-profit developers who build, purchase, and preserve affordable homes.

Berkeley voters last authorized the City to develop 500 units of low-income housing in 2016. Since that time, thanks to voters' enthusiastic support for Measures U1 and O, the City has fulfilled our Article 34 authorization and must again obtain voter approval to develop the affordable and supportive housing we need.

Recent State mandates require Berkeley to plan for the addition of several thousand affordable units over the next eight years. Measure N authorizes Berkeley to support the development or acquisition of an additional 3,000 units of low-income housing, enabling the City to meet State housing requirements and continue our successful efforts to address Berkeley's critical shortage of affordable homes.

Vote YES on Measure N to authorize up to 3,000 much-needed units of affordable and supportive housing and reaffirm Berkeley's commitment to equity and diversity.

s/Jesse Arreguín

Berkeley Mayor; President, Association of Bay Area Governments

s/Sophie Hahn

Berkeley City Council District 5

s/Brad Wiblin

Executive Vice President (EVP) BRIDGE Housing

s/Libby Lee-Egan

Chair, Housing Advisory Commission

REBUTTAL TO THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE N

No on N!

Measure N's marketing boasts to relieve the critical affordable housing shortage for everybody, but it offers no real solutions except the enrichment of corporations and their lavishly compensated managers.

The proponents make a specious claim to provide affordable apartments to students. Students won't qualify for this housing! So, without any assurances, UC students should be wary of these promises.

The proponents also claim that this measure is required because high home prices lock people out of the housing market, but this measure does nothing to help would-be homeowners.

No affordable homes for students, no affordable homes to purchase.

This measure will only create dedicated low-income buildings, like Berkeley's Hope Center project, adding to Berkeley's already substantial inventory of low-income projects. This Bridge Housing building has 89 units and cost \$745,000 per unit of housing. At that price, this measure's 3,000 units will cost \$2,235,000,000 to build. The \$97,000,000 left from Measure O is woefully insufficient. Similarly, the \$200,000,000 affordable housing portion of proposed Measure L will be a funding failure.

Berkeley will be short \$1,938,000,000 in funds needed to build! Almost 2 billion dollars!

A better plan to create affordable housing is with Berkeley's inclusionary affordable housing ordinance. This has successfully provided hundreds of affordable units through the years at no cost to residents.

We, the undersigned opponents of Measure N disagree with the City Council's intention to prioritize housing subsidized by homeowners over housing subsidized by market rate landlords.

Vote No on N!

s/James M Tharp
District 3 Voter

s/Justin Lee
Resident, District 2

s/Dan McDunn
Dissident

s/David K. Denton
Berkeley Homeowner

s/Lilana Spindler
Founder – Berkeley for Assessment Tax Equity

ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE N

Measure N is the **wrong way to create much needed affordable housing** in Berkeley because it involves long-term indebtedness and higher costs for civic services.

In the past, Berkeley successfully sued U.C.'s student expansion efforts to the tune of \$500 per new student. This was to account for the fiscal impact on services. Why isn't the City considering the impact on city services of 3,000 new low-income units in this measure?

Similar to UC's status, low-income landlords are exempt from the property and parcel taxes for the civic services of their tenants. Corporate landlords with 3,000 low-income units will create more cost burdens to schools, parks, libraries, Fire Dept and EMT. In so many units, 5,000 new residents means \$2,500,000 extra costs per year. This fiscal impact is on current residents, especially those paying the notorious parcel tax overages.

There is a better way to create more low-income units - through the 20% inclusionary ordinance which applies to every market rate development. Who pays for those tenants' services? The landlord does. You are not asked to subsidize wealthy developers. With 1800 total units entitled this year, and permitting on the upswing, we will have 3600 new affordable units in 10 years paid for entirely by landlords.

No Measure N needed!

Indeed, 2018's \$135,000,000 Measure O is being spent now to create hundreds of low-income units already. This vast wealth is being directed to local corporate landlords. Meanwhile, Berkeley struggles to provide basic services to residents and accuses you of underfunding affordable housing. On the contrary, you are supporting it every time you pay rent or your property tax bill.

Don't let this measure mislead you. It is unnecessary and makes you poorer and a few lucky corporate landlords wealthier. **Vote NO on Measure N!**

s/Chris Catlett
retiree

s/Laura Menard
Former BUSD Parent Advocate

s/Justin Lee
Voter District 2

s/Lilana Spindler
Founder, BATE, Berkeley for Assessment Tax Equity

REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE N

Let's be clear: If Measure N doesn't pass, Berkeley won't be able to create affordable housing in the coming years.

In the 1950s, a State constitutional amendment passed allowing communities to veto affordable housing, and for decades has contributed to the shortage of affordable units Statewide – fueling an epidemic of homelessness and housing insecurity. The law still stands – a shameful vestige of a racist past.

Measure N gives Berkeley the authorization to go ahead with our ambitious affordable housing program; without your YES votes, affordable housing will come to a halt.

We're shocked anyone would oppose Measure N and trust the voters of Berkeley to Vote YES. Despite an unprecedented housing crisis, opponents argue against low-income housing because they imagine it will increase burdens for other residents.

Due to rising housing costs, teachers, artists, retail and restaurant staff, and other essential workers are being priced out. They're key to keeping Berkeley a creative, diverse, safe, and vibrant community. Opponents of Measure N view these community members as a price tag rather than key contributors to our City's success.

Opponents argue that private developments can meet affordability needs, but market rate projects aren't yielding significant numbers of affordable units. Instead, the City is successfully leveraging County, State, Federal and private funds to create thousands of affordable units.

Vote Yes on Measure N to allow up to 3,000 more units of low-income housing in Berkeley and help our City address the dual crises of housing affordability and homelessness.

s/Igor A. Tregub
Chair, Sierra Club Northern Alameda County Group

s/Daniel Sawislak
Executive Director, Resources for Community Development

s/Chris Schildt
Chair, Berkeley Housing Authority Board

s/Leah Simon-Weisberg
Chair of the Berkeley Rent Board

s/Jesse Arreguín
Berkeley Mayor

