September 15, 2015

The Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA  95814

SUBJECT:  AB 744 (CHAU) Planning and Zoning: Density Bonus- Request for Signature

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of Circulate San Diego, whose mission is to create excellent mobility choices and vibrant, healthy neighborhoods, I am writing to communicate support for AB 744, which would allow a developer that is requesting a density bonus and including affordable units in the development, to also request that the city reduce the minimum parking requirements for the development.

As California grows, we need to plan and prepare for accommodating diverse populations and more dense development in our existing footprint. This calls for more housing in downtown areas and the need to upgrade and retrofit existing infrastructure to support larger populations. One major challenge in accomplishing this is providing the appropriate amount of residential housing and parking for the demand and need.

Much of California’s existing parking requirements are based on low-density and single-purpose land use designations. Parking is costly to build and maintain and can increase the cost of projects in existing developed areas by 10 to 20 percent. The high cost of land, construction, and maintenance to provide parking adds significantly to the cost of projects, making sites financially infeasible and hindering economic development strategies.

Increases in public transportation options and the development of more walkable and bikeable neighborhoods reduce the demand for parking. Reducing minimum parking requirements for affordable projects near transit allows builders and the market to decide how much parking is needed, can ensure sufficient amounts of parking and can significantly reduce the cost of development and increase housing affordability.

AB 744 would allow a developer that is requesting a density bonus and including 100% affordable units in the development, to also request that the city reduce the minimum
parking requirements for the development. To qualify, the affordable project would have to be within one-half mile of a major transit stop, or a seniors-only or special needs development that has access to paratransit or is within one-half mile of bus service that runs at least 8 times per day. Additionally, a mixed-income project that is within one-half mile of a major transit stop and includes the maximum percentage of affordable units under density bonus law would qualify for a parking reduction. Local governments could require a higher parking standard if they completed a parking study in the last seven years that supports the need for more parking.

AB 744 will boost the production of new affordable and market rate housing units by reducing costs associated with project entitlements and building and maintaining parking spaces. AB 744 aligns local land use decisions more closely with the goals of AB 32 and SB 375 by reducing the parking required for projects that are close to transit and serve individuals who have fewer cars.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that you sign AB 744 into law.

Sincerely,

Colin Parent
Policy Counsel, Circulate San Diego