



July 31, 2020

Re: Housing in High-Opportunity Areas

Dear Assemblymember Bloom:

We represent a diverse group of stakeholders working together to address California’s housing supply and affordability crisis and write to express our strong support for AB 1279.

AB 1279 provides for the designation of “high-opportunity” areas as prescribed, within which residential development which meets specified criteria shall be authorized by right. “High-opportunity” areas may encompass residentially or commercially zoned land but would exclude certain areas such as the coastal zone, fire hazard areas, and unremediated hazardous waste sites, among others. Projects would be subject to various size and affordability requirements depending on the location and nature of the project. Such projects would be subject to local design standards, but could qualify for density bonuses.

The housing shortage and affordability crisis in California has been amply documented. While the state Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) estimates that 180,000 units need to be built annually to maintain housing costs, actual housing production has been less than 80,000 units per year for the last decade. The 2016 McKinsey study calculated that California has a shortage of more than 2 million units, and that it would take building 500,000 units over a seven-year period to normalize housing prices.

As a result, the cost of housing in California is twice the national average, and only 28% of households can afford median-priced homes. Over 80% of low-income renters pay more than 30% of their income for housing.

This bill addresses the housing and affordability crisis by increasing the availability of land for the production of rental and ownership housing, by streamlining the process for the approval of qualified projects, and by prescribing affordability for candidate projects. In so doing, AB 1279 takes an important step toward beneficially increasing the supply of housing for those most in need of housing options.

For the foregoing reasons, we are pleased to support AB 1279. If you have any questions, please contact Roger Dickinson at dickinson31@comcast.net or (916) 599-2456.

Sincerely,

Howard Penn, Executive Director
Planning and Conservation League

Michelle Pariset, Policy Advocate
Public Advocates

Shashi Hanuman, Directing Attorney
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Anya Lawler, Legislative Advocate
Western Center on Law & Poverty

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