

The California Environmental Quality Act Protects Our Air, Water, Public Health and Natural Places

Since 1970, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) has protected our state's unparalleled natural areas, improved the livability of our communities, and kept Californians healthy and safe.



A STRONG CEQA:

PROMOTES ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- ✓ CEQA is one of the few tools available to underserved communities to discover and limit the impacts of potentially harmful developments like refineries, coal terminals, battery factories, oil wells, and warehouse facilities with heavy truck traffic on their neighborhoods.
- ✓ It requires projects to disclose and mitigate cumulative impacts that are often not considered by other environmental regulations, which take a piecemeal approach.
- ✓ Low-income Californians are disproportionately affected by high housing costs and long commutes. CEQA affords them a voice in land use decisions that could otherwise lead to rampant gentrification and displacement.

HELPS CALIFORNIA REACH ITS CLIMATE CHANGE GOALS

- ✓ CEQA helps California reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage sustainable growth. It is a key tool for decision-makers and community members to ensure that new projects reduce their contribution to climate change.
- ✓ CEQA requires that land use decisions track the state's climate goals and promote transit-friendly development. It thus supports California's ambitious climate protections set out in AB 32 and other critical legislation.
- ✓ CEQA requires that new projects incorporate all feasible measures and alternatives to reduce their contribution to climate change.
- ✓ CEQA discourages sprawl development and other land use practices that undercut the state's climate goals.

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Keep CEQA Strong

With environmental laws and protections being continually eroded at the national level, California leaders must do all they can to uphold our state's strongest environmental law.

A robust CEQA protects our communities, our environment, and our future.

A STRONG CEQA IS SUPPORTED BY THESE AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS



DOES NOT CONSTRAIN HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

- ✓ Studies by UC Berkeley School of Law¹ and the California Office of Planning and Research² found that local zoning and approval procedures and under-resourced planning agencies play the most significant roles in slowing down housing construction.
- ✓ Efforts to encourage streamlined approval for infill projects under CEQA are succeeding. The UC Berkeley study¹ of five Bay Area cities shows that most cities effectively streamline CEQA review for residential projects; very few projects require full environmental impact reports. The same researchers found that relatively few projects require a full EIR process in the LA area.
- ✓ A 2018 survey of California cities and counties revealed that between 2015 and 2017, only 6% of housing projects were reviewed by EIRs. The projects that did undergo full EIR review were generally large projects with potentially the greatest environmental impacts.³
- ✓ The 2018 study also found no causal relationship between CEQA review and the frequency of housing project withdrawals. Only 2.8% of the housing projects were withdrawn, and usually for applicant-related reasons, such as bankruptcy.³
- ✓ The Office of Planning and Research's annual survey of planning directors ranked CEQA 12th out of 16 common barriers to urban infill.⁴ Other recent studies have confirmed that CEQA is not a significant factor in limiting market-rate or affordable housing production.³

PROTECTS SENSITIVE HABITAT AND OPEN SPACE

- ✓ CEQA requires that major land use projects take all feasible steps to keep our air and water clean and preserve sensitive habitat and open space.
- ✓ CEQA provides important protections not found in subject-specific environmental laws and, unlike other laws, ensures that decision-makers address projects' cumulative impacts.
- ✓ CEQA's purpose is not to stop projects, but to avoid or mitigate their adverse effects to protect California's future through responsible, sustainable growth.

DOES NOT OVERBURDEN THE COURTS

- ✓ CEQA litigation rates are very low and have remained essentially unchanged over many years,⁵ even as the state's population has grown dramatically.
- ✓ Fewer than one percent of projects subject to CEQA review face litigation. On average, only about 200 CEQA lawsuits are filed annually.² There is no reason to weaken CEQA's citizen enforcement provisions for the benefit of developers.

CEQA Promotes Public Disclosure and Public Participation

CEQA requires public agencies to disclose environmental impacts of proposed developments before they are approved. The statute's procedures also ensure that residents have a chance to weigh in on major projects affecting their communities.



FOOTNOTES

1. UC Berkeley School of Law, 2018. <https://tinyurl.com/ceqa-fn01>
2. NRDC and California League of Conservation Voters, 2013. <https://tinyurl.com/ceqa-fn02>
3. Association of Environmental Professionals, 2018. <https://tinyurl.com/ceqa-fn03>
4. Governor's Office of Planning and Research, 2012. <https://tinyurl.com/ceqa-fn04>
5. Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment, 2016. <https://tinyurl.com/ceqa-fn05>