



REDUCING BARRIERS TO ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS

HOMELESSNESS IN CALIFORNIA

Homelessness in California is increasing, particularly among some of our most vulnerable populations:

- Over 134,000 Californians experience homelessness at any point in time. Up to 400,000 Californians are homeless throughout the course of a single year.
- In 2017, California was home to over 42% of Americans experiencing chronic homelessness (prolonged or repeated episodes of homelessness among people with disabling conditions). It was home to over 38% of the nation's young adults and unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness.
- Already the state with the largest homeless population, California suffered the largest increase in the number of residents experiencing homelessness between 2016 and 2017: over 16,000.

A PROVEN SOLUTION – SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Decades of research shows providing people with a stable, affordable place to live that does not limit length of stay, along with services that promote housing stability—the combination known as “supportive housing”—ends homelessness among people with the greatest vulnerabilities, including people experiencing chronic homelessness.

- Studies show supportive housing reduces public health costs significantly.
- Supportive housing reduces blight and improves property values.
- Supportive housing decreases recidivism to our local jails and state prisons.

For these reasons, **the State has invested millions of dollars in leveraging federal and local dollars to create more supportive housing.** California needs more developers to build supportive housing to use these resources more efficiently.

THE PROBLEM

Despite growing local, State, and federal recognition of supportive housing as an evidence-based intervention, **planners and local policymakers are subjected to vocal opposition to supportive housing projects, making these projects more difficult to site, more time-consuming to approve, and more costly to build. In fact, these projects take three or more years to develop in California,** far exceeding the time it takes to develop in other states.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING STREAMLINING

While local jurisdictions would be able to apply objective standards to reviewing an application to build supportive housing, streamlining legislation would allow non-profit developers to build supportive housing without the prolonged approval process typically required in these projects.

- Expediting approval of supportive housing would enable developers to create supportive housing without winning over every potential neighbor, and would free councilmembers/supervisors to approve projects without fearing retribution.
- It would allow developers and local jurisdictions to use public dollars more effectively and quickly.
- It would encourage developers to create more housing for people experiencing homelessness.

DIFFERENCES WITH EXISTING STREAMLINING LAW

In 2017, the Governor signed Senate Bill 35 (Wiener), which will streamline the development of affordable and market-rate housing. Some supportive housing projects will fall under this new law and will be built “by right” as a result. However, legislation to streamline the development of supportive housing is necessary to ensure supportive housing is created by right statewide:

- Supportive housing streamlining legislation would **simplify and expedite approval of applications for development**, beyond the process identified in SB 35, allowing developers to complete projects within shorter timeframe, at lower costs.
- Supportive housing streamlining would allow supportive housing development by right throughout the State, in areas falling outside the scope of SB 35. It would **encourage more developers to build in areas where little to no supportive housing currently exists**. SB 35 applies only to properties built within certain urban areas, and excludes some cities with substantial homeless populations, like Berkeley, Oakland, Glendale, and Pasadena.
- Supportive housing streamlining would allow developers to build in areas where cities allow for multifamily development, but may not have specifically zoned for residential use. Supportive housing developers currently build in areas commercially-zoned, but proposed projects under SB 35 must be on land specifically zoned for residential use.
- Supportive housing streamlining would **help developers turn blighted projects or properties into housing that enriches the community**. SB 35 excludes projects undergoing rehabilitation of existing units or new construction projects requiring demolition of housing occupied in the last 10 years (even if not currently occupied).

Streamlining the development of supportive housing would not only further the efforts of State and local governments to reduce homelessness among residents with the greatest vulnerabilities, it would expedite such developments, lower development costs, and ensure projects can be sited statewide.

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SUPPORT

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