



AB 2560 (Alvarez): Expanding Coastal Housing Access

Bill Summary

AB 2560 removes the Coastal Zones exemption from the state's Density Bonus Law.

Problem

The Coastal Zone is a stretch of land that runs the entire coast of California, ranging from as little as half a mile to as much as five miles inward that, through the 1976 Coastal Act, was designated as critical enough to California to warrant special status. This designation resulted in the creation of the Coastal Commission, which is tasked with conserving California's coastline by regulating and overseeing the vast majority of developments proposed within the Coastal Zone through issuing coastal development permits or certifying the Local Coastal Plans. Additionally, it exempts the coastal zone from many statewide housing initiatives, such as Density Bonus Law.

Unfortunately, this has played a pivotal role in preventing the development of enough housing to meet the demand on the coast. Researchers at the Turner Center found that between 1980 and 2010, the housing units in the typical U.S. Metro grew by 54 percent, while California's Coastal Metros only increased by 32 percent, despite significant population growth.¹

This discrepancy renders the coast unaffordable for the vast majority of Californians. Researchers at the Public Policy Institute found that in 2019, eight of the nation's ten least affordable major metropolitan areas were clustered on the California coast². Moreover, it also

found that median-priced homes in seven of these areas are effectively unaffordable for more than 75 percent of families across the state¹.

A lack of housing is also a climate change issue. For these areas to function as preferred destinations, service workers are critical. However, not being able to afford housing near their job site necessitates these workers expend resources and emit further CO₂ into the air to travel for work, compounding the climate crisis and threatening the very coastline the coastal commission is entrusted to protect. According to CARB, despite an impressive reduction in GHG emissions, transportation still maintains the largest proportion of emissions in the state³, while suburban residents can have 50% higher transportation emissions than city residents because they must travel to work, as found by researchers at UC Berkeley⁴.

Solution

As a state program that has proven successful in creating more market rate and affordable housing across the state, Density Bonus Law serves as an important tool to resolve the severe housing shortage in our coastal areas. Density Bonus Law only applies in areas already zoned residential and allows developers to build additional units above the zoned amount in exchange for a certain percentage of units deed restricted for affordable. This ensures areas already zoned for housing are building more units than they would have otherwise while also dedicating a portion of them for moderate, low, and very-low income earners.

1: Source: "Addressing California's Housing Shortage: Lessons from Massachusetts Chapter 40B," Carolina K. Reid, Carol Galante, and Ashley F. Weinstein-Carnes, Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law, Volume 25 (2), 241-274, [URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/26408189?read-now=1#page_scan_tab_contents]

2: Source: Housing. Hans Johnson, Jullien Lafortune, and Marisol Cuella Mejia, Public Policy Institute of California, January 2020, [URL: <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/californias-future-housing-january-2020.pdf>]

3: Source: "California Greenhouse Gas Emissions from 2000 to 2021: Trends of Emissions and Other Indicators," California Air Resources Board, [URL: https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/2000_2021_ghg_inventory_trends.pdf]

4: Source: "Spatial Distribution of U.S. Household Carbon Footprints Reveals Suburbanization Undermines Greenhouse Gas Benefits of Urban Population Density," Christopher Jones and Daniel M. Kammen, Energy and Resources Group, University of California, Berkeley, [URL: <https://rael.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Jones-Kammen-EST-proof-NationalCarbonMap.pdf>]



To resolve the severe housing crisis in the coastal zone, AB 2560 removes the exemption of the application of Density Bonus Law within the Coastal Zone.

Support

- Circulate San Diego,
- SPUR
- Bay Area Council

For More Information

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1: Source: "Addressing California's Housing Shortage: Lessons from Massachusetts Chapter 40B," Carolina K. Reid, Carol Galante, and Ashley F. Weinstein-Carnes, Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law, Volume 25 (2), 241-274, [URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/26408189?read-now=1#page_scan_tab_contents]

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3. Source: "California Greenhouse Gas Emissions from 2000 to 2021: Trends of Emissions and Other Indicators," California Air Resources Board, [URL: https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/2000_2021_ghg_inventory_trends.pdf]

4. Source: "Spatial Distribution of U.S. Household Carbon Footprints Reveals Suburbanization Undermines Greenhouse Gas Benefits of Urban Population Density," Christopher Jones and Daniel M. Kammen, Energy and Resources Group, University of California, Berkeley, [URL: https://rael.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Jones-Kammen-EST_proof-NationalCarbonMap.pdf]