



APA CALIFORNIA NEWS

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Planning News & Updates from APA California

CAL PLANNER **IFORNIA**



Curated Content Since 2014

Los Angeles area coastline neighborhood. Source: Adobe Stock

MARCYEBER | VP-Public Information

Housing is Not a One-sided Debate

For the 25th Anniversary Issue of the (topic-centric) *CalPlanner*, we decided to return to one of the most consequential issues facing California in the past couple of decades. Of course, I am referring to the topic of housing. Above all else, the issue of housing, specifically the shortage and affordability thereof, has been front and center in various planning policy debates, especially in the last dozen years. There isn't one specific culprit we can target or a single strategy we can implement to address the situation. APA California recognizes this complexity and is determined and committed to doing the work to help tackle this problem. That said, as the organization that represents the interests of planners throughout the state, whether in large urban centers or in small rural towns and everything in between, the Chapter carefully evaluates all aspects of any proposal in order for planners to have the most effective platform needed to carry out their specific missions in their respective communities. In this issue, we have assembled various voices on this topic, from state policymakers and reporters to developers and architects who are attempting to face this challenge head on.

Also in this issue are highlights from 2019, several farewells from outgoing Board members and a look back at the various covers of this publication since the 1960's. In 2014, we decided to reorganize and redesign the chapter newsletter to not only better reflect the reading appetite of our members, but also to develop a resource for the broader community... hence the 25th Anniversary Issue. It also marks my final opportunity to address you as the Principal Editor for this publication (more on this on pages 14-15). So with that, I write here for the last time. Happy Reading. **MY**

FIRST PERSON | Senator Scott Wiener, State Senate District 11

Framing the Big Picture on Housing

The following Opening Keynote Remarks were presented at the recent APA California Conference in Santa Barbara

Planners, thank you for having me. It's really an honor. I'm a huge admirer of the planning profession. As a neighborhood association president, member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, and California State Senator - I've seen it from all angles.

Between community meetings where the pitchforks come out, convening community stakeholders where people are at each others throats, and having all your work scrutinized, second-guessed, and criticized by elected officials like me, it's a hard job.

I've made a habit of hiring planners as legislative staffers precisely because you've seen it all and understand the big picture.

Speaking of the big picture, I want to challenge the planning profession—and the American Planning Association—to always see the big picture on housing.

It's far too easy as a planner, as with any human being, to miss the forest for the trees. To get so caught up in the traditional debates in our housing system, that one loses sight of the reality that the system is badly broken. That the system we built in the 1960s doesn't work in 2019. That our housing system—a system designed to make it impossible to build enough housing—is pushing people into poverty and homelessness, increasing carbon emissions by inducing sprawl, normalizing the moral disaster of people living in their cars, and screwing over a generation of young people who can't get a housing foothold and can't even move to

where they grew up unless they're going to live in their parents' basement.

That's the big picture. That's why we do this work. We must always keep this in mind.

I've enjoyed working with APA in Sacramento. But since I feel like I'm among family, I do need to be candid. Of the six housing bills I've authored in the legislature, APA has opposed five of them, including our two zoning reform bills, SB 50 and SB 827, our RHNA reform bill SB 828, our streamlining bill SB 765, and this year, our Housing Accountability Act loophole closure bill SB 592. **—P4**

Senator Scott Wiener, Santa Barbara.
Source: Conference photographer



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This 725 square-foot home in Los Angeles recently sold in 2018 for more than \$700,000. Source: Adriene Hill/KPCC

FEATURE | Matt Levin

5 Reasons California's Housing Costs are So High

Why are California housing costs so high? At its most basic level, it's a story of supply and demand—lots of people want to live here, and there aren't enough homes to go around.

But there are lots of *uniquely California factors*—from the shape of our coastline to Proposition 13—that have attached a painfully expensive price tag to the California dream. The median price of a home is now *well over half a million dollars*. That number is about *\$240,000 nationally*. More than *20 percent of Californians* pay more than half their income for housing.

Here are five reasons the state's housing market got so out of whack.

1. We Haven't Built Enough Housing

Experts who study California's housing crisis argue about lots of things. Is rent control

good or bad? Will that new shiny high-rise going up in your neighborhood help or hurt housing costs? How much should we blame "not in my backyard" NIMBYs for our problems? But there is one principle the vast majority of housing experts agree on: Over the past few decades, California hasn't built enough housing to keep up with the number of people who live here. The state housing department estimates that we need to build 180,000 new housing units a year to keep prices stable. Over the past 10 years, we've averaged less than half of that.

Even when new construction was

booming in the early and mid-2000s, new homes and apartment buildings weren't being built in coastal cities where the vast majority of Californians work. While places like the Inland Empire and Central Valley saw a building craze, places like San Francisco and Los Angeles basically flatlined. We're also not keeping up with other states. Places like New York and Massachusetts have built a lot more housing per capita than we have in recent years. That hasn't made those places cheap, but it has helped to alleviate some cost pressures.

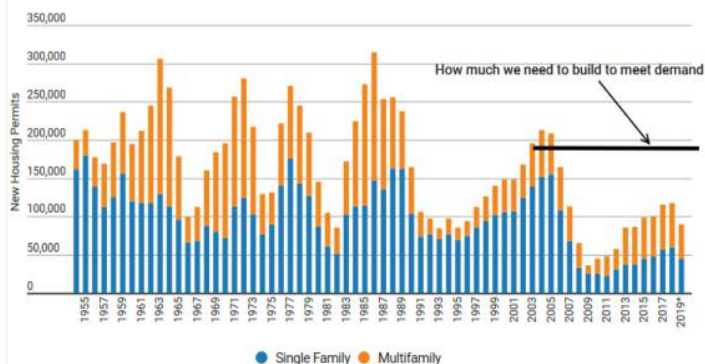
2. Demand to Live, Work and Own in Urban California Has Reached a Breaking Point, and Part of That Demand Is Global

Over the last decade, Californians have increasingly tried to cram themselves into major urban centers that are already jammed with residents. The Bay Area is the poster child here. Between 2000 and 2007, Bay Area cities accounted for only 4 percent of the state's total population growth. Between 2010 and 2017, nearly 20 percent of all new Californians were either being born in or moving to the Bay.

While the tech industry certainly bears much of the responsibility for that trend, the increased demand to live in California's urban cores extends beyond Silicon Valley. The urban parts of L.A. and San Diego have all seen a major increase in people wanting to live and work there, which means increased competition for rental housing. And we're not just talking about apartment rentals. Here's a pretty amazing graph. The number of single-family homes occupied by renters grew by more than 400,000 over the



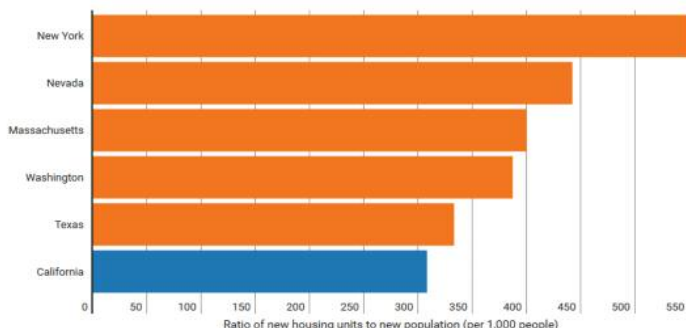
California doesn't build like it used to



Source: California Department of Housing and Community Development; CIRB, Public Policy Institute of California

California trails other states in building new homes for new people

Between 2005 and 2014, California built a little more than 300 new homes for every 1,000 new Californians. That's a lower rate than states like New York and Texas.



CAL PLANNER IFORNIA

CalPlanner is published by the California Chapter of the American Planning Association. APA California members receive this subscription as part of their membership.

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2020 PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

Issue	Topic	Articles Due	Released
20 01	Mobility	Mar 15	Apr 16
20 02	Conference Issue	Jun 26	Jul 30
20 03	TBA	Oct 5	Oct 29

The production schedule is subject to change. For article and photo specifications, please see guidelines at www.apacalifornia.org.

CalPlanner ARTICLE SPECS

20|01 THEME: Mobility

LENGTH: 700 (min) to 1,200 (max) words

DOC FORMAT: Working (or open) MS WORD file (.doc or .docx). No PDF's please.

IMAGES: Include captions and sources for all photos, renderings, drawings, maps, diagrams, etc. submitted.

IMAGE FORMAT: 3 X 5 min at 300 dpi (but no larger than 1MB file size) to be emailed as separate attachment(s). In other words, do not embed images in the WORD document.

REMARKS: Article can be written either as a Feature (analysis of the topic), Op-Ed (critique), or First-Person (personal experience with the topic).

FOR QUESTIONS AND SUBMISSIONS,

Please contact Marc Yeber at myplanning@live.com

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JULIA LAVE JOHNSTON | President

Planning Challenges are an Opportunity for APA California and Our Members



I have to be honest; I found 2019 challenging. But some of you may have heard me say, every challenge is an opportunity. We were rich in opportunities in 2019. Here are some of those

opportunities that I am looking forward to APA California taking on in 2020.

The Generations: I think that whole Okay Boomer! meme is pretty funny and I'm a Boomer. While the Great Generation War makes for good clickbait, APA California works hard to support planners during the length and breadth of their careers. Our sections have wonderful programs for students and young professionals through our Young and Emerging Planners Groups (YEP), and provides opportunities for our experienced planners to give back by mentoring and assisting in training programs. We invest a lot of our resources, both human and financial, to provide meaningful continuing education through our conference and section activities. This year we will be focusing on expanding our distance education offerings so we can better serve all our members regardless of geographic location and funding resources. I have a lot of faith in planners to address the challenges I mean opportunities -facing our communities. I am gratified that so many young planners continue to choose our profession because they believe it offers them an opportunity to make a difference. They are the future of APA, of planning, and of our society. So, to the next generation of planners: You are amazing and I have faith in your ability to find collaborative solutions that benefit all. APA California will continue to support your professional growth. As for the rest of you, thank you for all that you do and for your continued support of APA California. We really are better together.

The Housing Crisis: I can't help but think that building more housing is too simplistic an approach to the Housing Crisis. Yes! We need more housing, particularly affordable housing, but building more housing cannot be done in a vacuum. There is a whole community of infrastructure that goes with that housing so that the people living there can thrive. APA California supports housing near transit, infill, and by-right housing. But we also support equitable communities that provide all residents access to jobs, schools, parks, transit, healthcare etc. The book, *The Color of Law*, is a stark lesson in how housing inequality and the resulting neighborhood disinvestment can impact opportunities for generations. I believe that the Housing Crisis is partially a result of decades of underinvestment in infrastructure and the lack of funds to support community services including those to deal with homelessness, addiction and mental illness. APA California wants to be a part of the solution to fix what Senator Weiner calls a broken system (see his comments in this newsletter). We welcome the opportunity to be part of the conversation to find solutions to increase housing and strengthen our communities.

Equity: APA California is working to expand diversity in its leadership and membership. We are also trying to understand how we can best serve the diverse communities we work in. How can we empower community members to represent themselves? As part of these efforts, the board added a Vice President for Diversity and Equity. We are also establishing similar positions in all our sections and reaching out to planners of color, women and LGBTQ planners. In 2019, we developed a pilot implicit bias and cultural equity training specifically for planners. We received a grant from National APA to help with the development and the long-term goal is to make the training available on line to all APA Chapters. There is no overnight

▶ Framing the Big Picture on Housing

Responding to APA's opposition to SB 50—a bill that overrides local restrictive zoning to legalize apartment buildings and affordable housing near transit and jobs—APA's founding president, Dorothy Walker, wrote: "It is long past time for any of us to believe that total reliance on local decision-making will result in outcomes that will serve the needs of everyone ... The restrictive and exclusionary practices of too many cities are major factors in the housing crisis now engulfing many parts of our state." She encouraged APA not to become "the voice of the status quo."

I'm an adult, and I've been around the block long enough to know that people don't have to agree on everything. I'm not always right—I could come up with a long list of times when I've been wrong—and legislation I author is certainly not perfect. I've definitely introduced a few duds here and there, I'll acknowledge. People are entitled to their views on any piece of legislation that I or anyone else authors. So this isn't about agreeing with me or not agreeing with me.

But it is about being forward-looking toward the future of housing in California. About whether we are going to focus on the big picture—i.e., the housing mess we've inflicted on ourselves—or get caught up in the details.

“Extreme local control . . . politicizes land use and disempowers and discourages city planners from fully doing their job.”

APA has a unique opportunity and speaks with a uniquely powerful voice in looking at the big picture and understanding and explaining the need for transformational change.

The planning profession, in my humble opinion, should not ally itself with the League of California Cities and other organizations that reflexively oppose anything that reduces local control over housing.

The planning profession, in my humble opinion, should not be defending cities like Cupertino, which flout state law and look for every conceivable loophole in order to avoid building the housing we so desperately need.

The planning profession is so much bigger and forward-looking than that.

Indeed, the planners I know—and I think they're representative—didn't go to planning school to defend local control or the housing status quo or to defend bad actor cities that obstruct housing. They went to planning school



Typical gridded single-family zoning. Source: Shutterstock

because they are passionate about how cities and infrastructure can be designed to improve the health and well-being of our communities. Because they want people in our communities to live the best lives possible and they understand that how we shape our communities in terms of housing and infrastructure plays a big role in deciding what kind of lives people lead.

Extreme local control—which is what we have in California when it comes to housing—politicizes land use and disempowers and

discourages city planners from fully doing their job.

This extreme local control encourages and fosters a non-democratic process where the people who have the time and ability to attend long community meetings are perceived as representing the majority view, when that often isn't the case. Single moms with two jobs aren't attending those hearings.

I challenge APA and the entire planning profession to deeply scrutinize whether extreme local control has worked for housing in California and, if it hasn't, how we fundamentally change the system so that it works.

I value my relationship with APA and look forward to working with APA to craft and pass progressive, forward-looking, inclusive, and sustainable housing policy for our great state

Now let's get to housing.

A few things to note at the outset:

We focus on technical terms, but it's about

real people. This debate always needs to be about the effects on real people's lives. People don't understand the technical, but they definitely understand how people get hurt.

People could care less who's fixing the problem—local, state, federal—just they want it fixed.

Housing is a climate issue but is left out of debate. For example, the Green New Deal, wildfire discussions in California, the focus on clean grid but less on transportation, don't focus on housing. But 40% of California carbon emissions are from transportation because of our messed up housing patterns.

“Luxury” vs. “affordable”

Luxury is an over-used term and is used by opponents of housing to disparage new housing construction. It's important not to confuse “luxury” with “expensive.”

All housing is expensive because there's not enough of it.

Subsidized housing is crucial, but in California to fill the housing deficit exclusively with subsidized housing would mean five to 10 years of the entire California general fund because it would mean all subsidies.

Arguing that the only housing we should build is subsidized means telling middle class to leave. The only solution for middle class is to dramatically increase supply. Even for low income folks, the vast majority live in privately produced housing and we won't have enough subsidized units in foreseeable future.

I want to be very clear: we need both market rate and subsidized housing. When someone argues we should only build subsidized affordable housing, that person is

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actually arguing not to build much housing at all.

Let's talk about the numbers and trends:

California used to do it the old-fashioned way: as population grew, we built more homes. Then we stopped. And then housing got really expensive. And then people got mad about housing costs, but we didn't address the root cause—that we weren't building much housing.

The magnitude:

We have a 3.5 million home deficit, equal to other 49 states' deficit combined.

In the early 1960s, California's population was 15 million and we built 250,000-300,000 homes a year. Today, California's population is 40 million and we build 80,000 homes/year. So our population nearly tripled while housing production dropped by over two-thirds.

So when people run around saying "we can't build our way out of our housing problems" or "supply and demand don't apply to housing" or that advocating for more housing supply is "trickle down housing," I call...you know what.

When you've spent 50 years suppressing housing supply and generating a multi-million home deficit, the core of the solution is to create a lot more housing of all types and for all income levels

The results are stark:

California has 25% of the nation's homeless and half of nation's unsheltered homeless.

About two-thirds of California homeless are unsheltered.

California has a very high poverty rate. 1.7 million low-income Californians put more than 50% of their income towards housing.

One in 20 schoolchildren in California is homeless. This is also almost certainly an under-count and an audit is currently underway.

This is a top polling issue but nothing is done due to significant political paralysis.

How did we get here?

By creating a system that is designed to fail: designed to under-produce housing, designed to make it hard, impossible, time-consuming, and extremely expensive to build any housing.

Don't hate the player, hate the game: city

council members and other local officials, like planners are set up for failure. Good people who struggle to succeed. It's important not to demonize them.

California's modern approach to housing was created in 1960s through the 1980s, when we were much smaller; our population was 15 million in 1960, 20 million in 1970.

And we've massively down-zoned; banning apartment buildings. California is 80% single family zoned, 70% in San Francisco and Los Angeles, even near jobs and transit.

“ Don't hate the player, hate the game: city council members and other local officials, like planners are set up for failure. ”

California used to build lots of apartment buildings, until they got banned.

When apartment buildings are banned through zoning, affordable housing is banned because only multi-unit housing can provide solutions at scale with the problem.

Single family zoning was invented after racial zoning was struck down. It's exclusionary. It means that if you can't afford a single family home you can't live in a community. And it means no affordable housing can exist in that community.

CEQA, discretionary permits, conditional use, endless appeals, and lawsuits mean that it takes:

- Ten years to do an area rezoning or housing element,
- Three to four years to approve a zoning compliant housing project.
- And that a neighbor can stop or delay you from putting an ADU in your home.

These things shouldn't be normal, but they are. We need to change that.

There are lots of regressive anti-housing strategies out there: a housing moratoria, a population cap, a housing cap, letting zoning changes and housing elements go to a vote (SB 330).

Now people are proposing to cap job growth. Yes, they're arguing that instead of increasing housing, we should block jobs from coming. That's how economies stagnate.

This is perhaps the ultimate sign of privilege—you're so comfortable in your life and your housing, you're arguing that rather than just building enough housing, we should not have job growth for the next generation and for people who need jobs.

Others like to say "it's not a housing problem, just a transportation problem and we just need better rail connections to the

Central Valley." I respectfully disagree.

I'm all for better rail connectivity to the Central Valley and I happen to think there are some great cities in the Central Valley that have a bright future, but just demanding that people leave the coastal areas to move inland is not the solution. We can't just export our housing responsibility to other regions. That's irresponsible and not very neighborly.

This "it's just a transportation problem" argument should be rephrased as: "I don't want any apartment buildings in my neighborhood,

even though I live near a transit station and near downtown, so I want you to move three hours away and commute in by train."

California's broken tax system is also a problem: with Prop 13, it's hard for cities to raise revenue to fund services. This leads to major reliance on impact fees that make housing more expensive.

Some cities use impact fees and inclusionary requirements to stop development: it's amazing to see cities that have fought for decades not to allow low income housing suddenly become champions for really high inclusionary rates.

Parking requirements also block new housing production.

Pure local control:

Local control is good when it delivers good results.

Housing is unique among policy priorities—because extreme local control dominates and ensures tunnel-vision approach to housing. It's a race to the bottom.

Each neighborhood basically gets to decide whether to allow housing. And guess what the answer is?

We make city council members walk the plank each week and give them little or no cover.

There's of course an ugly history of "local control" and housing. This argument was used to keep people of color and low income people out of "white" neighborhoods. The Fair Housing Act was signed in 1968 to prevent discriminatory zoning. It's still essential for state and federal government to provide broad regulations to stop discriminatory zoning at the local level.

This debate isn't about whether to get rid of local control. Local decision-making is often the best way to go. The debate is about whether to move away from extreme local control and

➤ P5 Framing the Big Picture on Housing

instead have a balance of state standards within which local control operates.

What do we need to do?

- We need a way to approve housing more quickly. That's why I authored a streamlining bill (SB 35).
- We need to control costs. This requires important labor/industry conversations to ensure reasonable impact fees.
- We need to fund affordable housing. We've made lots of progress last few years, but we need to do more.
- We need to protect renters. We passed AB 1482, landmark legislation regulating rent increases.
- We need strong accountability to ensure cities can't ignore state housing laws.
- And we need zoning reform.

Zoning reform:

Zoning is not the only issue, but it's foundational.

You can have all the streamlining, cost controls, and affordable housing funding in the world, but if it's illegal to build the housing because of zoning, you're stuck.

Zoning is technical, so it's important to use plain English: zoning is the government saying what kind of housing is legal to build.

“ This fight requires breaking glass, and violating orthodoxies like local control or single family zoning. ”

Any housing not zoned for is banned. Single family zoning means apartment buildings, condos, affordable housing—even small multi-unit—is completely banned.

If you step back and think about it, can you believe that we've banned even small apartment buildings in 75% of the residentially zoned land in California? Let that sink in.

What kind of rational housing system says that on 75% of the land in California—even land that is near transit, near jobs, in the middle of major metropolitan areas—it's illegal to build anything other than a single family home, and that it's absolutely prohibited to build more than one unit of housing per parcel? On what planet does that make sense?

Single family zoning means banning affordable housing.

California's addiction to restrictive zoning

creates a simple geometry problem in terms of dealing with that 3.5 million home deficit.

It leads to much less housing. LA down-zoned in the mid-80s and literally deleted 50% of its zoned housing capacity.

- It means high housing costs, because of severe capacity restrictions.
- It means no affordable housing where it needs to be.
- It means segregation.
- It means super-commuters and sprawl: if you're not building in our metro areas by jobs and transit, you're building further and further out.
- And it harms businesses, like San Francisco's historic, Tenderloin-based restaurant Farmer Brown, which shut last year due to rent increases and a worker shortage.

History of zoning reform in California:

An ADU/density bonus has been on the books since 1980s, but mostly ignored—that's changing.

We have been passing various laws to expand scope of our ADU requirements and make the density bonus more robust. We passed nearly half dozen new laws in this area just this year. But it's not enough in terms of the sheer scale of what we need as a state.

We need to build a coalition for zoning reform and understanding the opposition. That's been the goal of a three year legislative

process to legalize housing in transit and job-rich corridors and speed up approval time—SB 35, SB 827, and now SB 50.

A strong pro-housing policy can build a diverse and powerful coalition.

It's a coalition made up of labor and business, trades and developers, nonprofit affordable housing developers, realtors and apartment associations, the AARP and UC Students Association, most major environmental organizations, United Way and Habitat for Humanity, plus mayors and council members from all over our state.

Opposition:

No-growth people-neighborhood groups, city councils responding to anti-growth people—latch on to progressive critiques, because they sound less exclusionary: “Yeah,

we've viciously fought off any low income housing for 50 years, but now we want to impose a 40% inclusionary requirement because we love low income housing so much. Oh, it has nothing to do with 40% being infeasible and killing development.”

Statewide anti-growth groups Livable California (“Livable” for people lucky enough to have stable housing) claim to be for affordable housing and to be advocating for tenants, but they fight zoning reform that would actually allow for affordable housing.

And of course there's real fear that any market rate housing will lead to displacement, evictions and gentrification. That's why we always include strong tenant protections and affordability provisions.

We're working closely with housing justice groups to give more flexibility to sensitive communities at risk of displacement and gentrification.

These same attacks were made on SB 35, but it has become a huge engine for affordable housing. SB 50 will be the same.

One of the groups that went after SB 35 is now using it to streamline affordable housing projects.

SB 50 moving forward. SB 50 is moving forward in January. It's not guaranteed to pass: it's a hard bill. But we've spent two years crafting it. We have more work to do, but I'm cautiously optimistic we will get there. Because we have to.

Housing is hard. There are few incentives for politicians to tackle it meaningfully; there few short term wins to be had. This fight requires breaking glass, and violating orthodoxies like local control or single family zoning.

And fighting to build more housing gets you demonized.

But it's so important. We have to do it. And we have to take the heat.

It's now a national conversation, which matters a lot. We just need to keep up the political momentum.

I look forward to working with APA and the planning profession generally to move toward a brighter housing future for California.

Thank you.

Senator Scott Wiener represents San Francisco and northern San Mateo County in the California State Senate. Elected in 2016, Senator Wiener focuses extensively on housing, transportation, civil rights, criminal justice reform, clean energy, and alleviating poverty. He chairs the Senate Housing Committee.

➤ P2 5 Reasons California's Housing Costs are So High

last 10 years, while the number of owner-occupied units dropped during the Great Recession and has yet to recover.

So who owns these houses? The vast majority are “mom and pop” investors and wealthy individuals buying one or two additional properties. Foreign buyers, primarily from China, have also become increasingly enamored with California real estate. Last year, nearly one in four California single-family homes were sold in all-cash transactions, an indication of investor appetite for California real estate.

Overall, investors are a relatively small part of the housing market, especially when viewed through a statewide lens. But in certain local markets, investors compete directly with California families for homes.

3. Proposition 13 Dilutes a City's Incentive to Build New Housing

Why hasn't California built enough housing to keep up with its population? Most housing researchers agree that part of the reason is *Proposition 13*, the landmark 1978 ballot initiative that capped how much local governments could collect from property taxes. While intended to protect California homeowners from unmanageable property tax

capped, local governments have become increasingly reliant on other revenue sources. That vacant land is much more valuable to the city's coffers if a big box retailer gets built on it, as opposed to a multifamily apartment building. Housing nerds call this the “fiscalization of land use.” *There's debate* about just how much Proposition 13 is to blame for the state's housing shortage. But talk to local elected officials, and you'll see the issue isn't just a hypothetical dilemma.

4. In Most Parts of California, the Process to Get New Housing Approved Is Difficult, Time-Consuming and Expensive

It can be hard to be sympathetic to developers. From time immemorial, it feels like they've complained about rules and regulations they say make it harder to build their projects. The builder who designed Stonehenge probably thought there was too much bureaucracy involved. While it may be tough to trust developers, that doesn't necessarily mean that they're wrong. The process by which a

piece of land is approved for new construction can be incredibly cumbersome, time-consuming and risky. While good data on exactly how much this adds to housing costs is hard to come by, *typical approval time* for projects in San Francisco is over a year, while in L.A. it's eight months. That doesn't include when land needs to be “rezoned” for residential development, which can take even longer.

Why the lag?

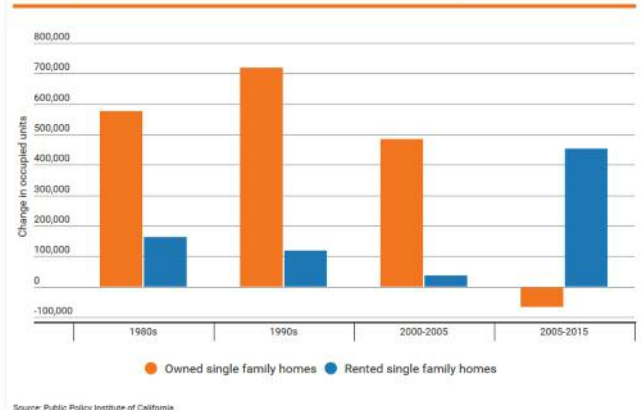
Here's the laundry list.

- **Multiple Layers of Government Review:** A housing project often must go through multiple government agencies, including the planning department, health department, fire department, building department and perhaps most importantly, a city council.
- **Lots of Avenues for “Not In My**

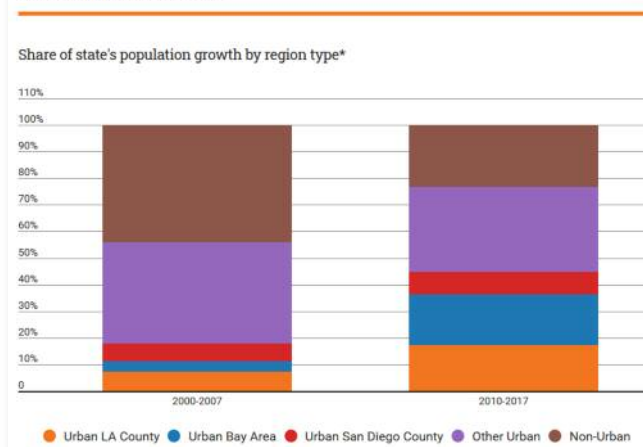
Backyard” Voices: The review process for new developments gives ample opportunity for local residents to express their opposition. Locals may fear that new housing projects will change the character of their neighborhoods, increase traffic and hurt their property values. If a city councilmember votes for new housing, he or she may have to face dissatisfied voters.

- **An Often Misused Environmental Law:** The California Environmental Quality Act, or CEQA, requires that local agencies consider the environmental impact of a new housing development before approving it. That sounds like a

The rise of single-family rentals in California



California bands together



bills, Proposition 13 has produced a host of unintended consequences. Imagine you're a city, sitting on a huge plot of vacant land. You could zone that land for housing or for commercial use, like a hotel or a Target. Your city obviously needs more housing—prices are sky high. Easy decision, right?

Nope. Proposition 13 has made development decisions much more complicated. Because property taxes are

worthy goal, but the law has often been abused to prevent new developments—even environmentally friendly ones with high-density housing and bike lanes. According to the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office, CEQA appeals delay a project by an average of *two and a half years*.

- **Local Growth Controls:** Two-thirds of California coastal cities and counties have adopted policies that explicitly limit the number of new homes that can be built within their borders or policies that limit the density of new developments. Subtler growth controls include not zoning enough land for new development or requiring supermajorities to approve new housing.

5. Land, Labor and Raw Material Costs Are Higher in California Than the Rest of the Country. And Those Costs Are Rising



San Fernando Valley housing construction. Source: Adobe Stock

Q & A | David Abel

Unpacking California's 'Housing Affordability Crisis'

This was originally published in the October 2019 issue of *The Planning Report*

Bill Witte, CEO and Chairman of Related California—one of the largest developers of urban and multifamily housing in the state—has for the past 30 years been responsible for development portfolio of 16,000 residential units totaling more than \$6 billion in assets. TPR's David Abel recently interviewed Bill on how state and local governments ought to respond to the state's challenges with housing affordability, growth in homelessness, and 'missing middle' housing supply.

"I'm very supportive of the effort to reinstate redevelopment, because the tools of redevelopment are one of the few ways that cities, particularly growth areas, can leverage resources in a targeted way to affect housing affordability."—Bill Witte

As the Chairman and CEO of a company building affordable housing for more than three decades—how should political and civic leaders be framing the challenges of increasing the supply of affordable housing, and also homeless units, in California's urban metropolises?

Bill Witte: I've long stated that government can affect the availability and affordability of housing really in just two ways. The first, which until recently has been given short shrift, is land use policy, and the second is direct financial support.

The good news is that with the ascension of Governor Newsom and activity in the state legislature, there have been more initiatives

proposed and more discussion about increasing housing for all income levels than I've seen in California in my professional career—which goes back to 1981. The uncertain news is that some of the underlying challenges that would enable many of these initiatives to really bear fruit in a timely way haven't really been addressed yet.

First of all, job growth fuels housing demand. There has been a lot of job growth at the high end and the low end, but not so much in the middle. And yet, a lot of the response to the housing problem has been to impose fees

“ Either you accept that we have a housing problem, or you don't. You can't just point fingers and say it's not my responsibility. ”

on market-rate housing. Housing doesn't create housing demand; job growth creates housing demand. Housing accommodates housing demand. I do find that to be an ineffective response to the housing supply and even affordability issue.

The second—for which I have no immediate solution and the state doesn't seem to agree on one either—is that in California, every little jurisdiction seemingly has—except for unincorporated parts of counties—its own planning commission. Land-use policy is so disaggregated that, even though housing markets are at a minimum metropolitan wide, there seems to be little opportunity for real regional planning.

Third is—at least of late—while Governor Brown was a great governor, housing was not his thing; it didn't get a lot of attention in Sacramento while he was governor.

What has happened? These are all obvious things. The affordability gap particularly in Coastal California—between an increasing percentage of the population and the reality of market-rate rents and home prices—keeps widening, despite whatever efforts seem to be made at the local level.

Data shows that the middle class—at least in raw numbers—is leaving California, on a net basis. And yet, population is growing to some degree at the high, college-educated end, and at the low end. Jobs tend to be either demanding of a lot of technical background, or in the service industry. That's not a recipe for a healthy environment. So, what to do?

I think that's a whole different question about what the response to this can be. There have been various initiatives—mostly by Bay-area legislators, and in particular San Francisco State Senator Scott Wiener—to have the state intervene in local markets to free up density. It's been, in my opinion, widely misunderstood in places like Los Angeles where resistance has been fierce—but I don't think the City of Los Angeles is the culprit here. In many suburban communities, the resistance is indefensible. Either you accept that we have a housing problem, or you don't. You can't just point fingers and say it's not my responsibility.

The most egregious example of that is in Marin County, north of San Francisco. Politically, it's one of the more liberal counties in the state, but it is more fiercely resistant to housing of

any kind, particularly any density, as much as or more than any place I've seen. That's just not right, but the state is so large—and I've told this to people in Sacramento—that trying to impose a statewide solution to this seems to be doomed to political failure. Although the fact that people are still proposing it and raising the issue is a good thing.

Is it fair to assume that silos are more easily broken at the local level, not at the state level in terms of having a holistic policy solution?

City halls are usually in the best position not only to respond to it, but to be held accountable for how they respond. Having said

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that, I think the state has a very relevant roll to play using its bully pulpit to prod and incent people at the local level to act. I happen to believe that in many places—not San Francisco, maybe not LA—if the state weren't pushing so hard on housing, there would be less focus on it.

Maybe regional approaches are better. Where does that take us in LA? Housing markets and housing dynamics are in fact regional, but every little burg has its own planning commission and, to some degree, land use control. You have SCAG, but it has no teeth and, frankly, I don't think it has a lot of credibility. Particularly after a few years back when it concluded that the Inland Empire, not Orange County, should carry the load of affordable housing. But where are the service jobs that those low-income people are working? They're in Orange County.

Could there be some multi-mayor initiative? I don't know. There are some positive signs. The City of LA passed its \$1.1 billion housing bond for capital costs; the county, led

by Mark Ridley-Thomas, passed that \$350 million bond for operating costs. I think that was a rare and very positive example of the city and the county working together on a semi-regional problem. I do think—as the LA Times never stops reminding us—maybe the city was a little slow in getting organized to implement it. But it's a very complicated issue, and it's not easy.

We've built 30,000 units in downtown Los Angeles—and you've been a major contributor to that productivity—rents have only gone up and the working class has lost leverage. What are the lessons here about how we frame this issue?

There are a couple of things. There's been huge job growth since the recession. Number one, as much progress has been made particularly in Downtown LA and a few other places, it's obviously not enough. Number two, it's not just a supply-side problem, but that is part of it. People are here for those jobs, and

they're already here. When people oppose transit-oriented development or say it's a sham, my question is where are these people going to live?

Let me be more specific. Just because we need supply, doesn't mean that you should have a 40-story high rise in a single-family neighborhood. I think LA has done a reasonable—not perfect—job in trying to steer high-density development to neighborhoods where it makes sense in terms of transit accessibility and, more importantly, in terms of urban design and planning. Except how do you respond to the reality that, for whatever reason, a lot of the job growth has been on the Westside of LA, but most of the housing has been in or around Downtown. And that's not to say it isn't needed there, but there is a disconnect.

I will say something—and I've said this before publicly—about all this housing in downtown, where there's all this talk about housing affordability. Here's the one part of the city where a whole range of incentives—zoning

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➤P7 5 Reasons California's Housing Costs are So High

Unfortunately, California's coastline topography *makes it more expensive to build here* than most other places. Also, there's the ocean. You can't expand into the ocean. Limited land plus tons of demand means high land prices. In many markets in California, the bulk of a single-family home or apartment building's value is in the land it is built on. But while the land itself is what typically eats up most of a developer's budget in California's hottest

markets, it's not the only cost-driver. Construction labor and the cost of the raw materials have been rising over the last five years, and are higher in California than other parts of the country. According to the *Legislative Analyst's Office*, construction labor is about 20 percent more expensive in major California cities than in the rest of the country. On the labor side, a shortage of skilled construction workers bears much of the



blame. When the housing market crashed in the late 2000s, construction workers left the industry in droves. And those same workers haven't come back.

Construction today just doesn't seem to have the same appeal to younger workers. Firms are struggling to recruit younger workers to supplement and eventually replace a graying workforce. Building codes and environmentally friendly design

requirements in many California cities require different types of raw building materials to be used, some of which can be pricier than elsewhere in the country. And nationwide, the cost of vital resources like lumber and concrete are on the *upswing*. There are plenty of reasons beyond the five we've mentioned here that help explain why California housing costs have gotten so out of control. The task of making California affordable again—or at least relatively affordable again—defies a simple silver-bullet solution.

CALmatters' Ben Christopher contributed to this report.

Matt Levin is the "data and housing dude" for CALmatters and co-hosts the podcast, "Gimme Shelter." His award winning reporting has appeared on Marketplace, NPR's Here & Now, and in the San Francisco Chronicle.

The California Dream Series is a statewide media collaboration of CALmatters, KPBS, KPCC, KQED and Capital Public Radio with support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the James Irvine Foundation, and the College Futures Foundation.

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and other land use maneuvers—have been used to generate lots of housing and quite successfully. How much of that has been set aside as affordable? I think the percentage is miniscule, and I'm not focusing on any one project or proposal. If that's where the bulk of your housing is being produced, and you can't find a way—holistically, not project by project—to generate more affordability, I think something is wrong with the policy.

You acknowledged that housing and homelessness are complicated issues. Unpack a little bit the issue such that our readers, legislators, or city managers can appreciate their complexities.

We have begun working with the Weingart Center who already has one development in the works—a very large, new homeless housing development in Skid Row. We're also doing work with A Community of Friends in Santa Ana on a homeless and

“The tools of redevelopment are one of the few ways that cities, particularly growth areas, can leverage resources in a targeted way ...”

affordable housing project. I've asked them and others how much of the homeless population is mentally ill and drug addicted? How much is pure, economic homelessness?

I don't think there's hard data on this, but that's one layer of complexity. There is a view that you have to address the social and healthcare side of this before you address the housing side, or you'll never be able to dig out from under it. That's a little bit different from the 'housing first' view of getting people into stable shelter first. Regardless, I'm not taking sides; I'm just saying it makes it a challenging issue. There are people making \$50,000 to \$60,000 a year who can't afford housing; we've got to get them in affordable housing. They're good citizens; it's purely an affordability issue.

The second complexity comes from understanding the dynamics. The city of LA's population is around 13 percent African American, and I believe the homeless population is maybe 40 percent African American. What does that say about the local dynamic? There's a similar dynamic in San Francisco. For example, are there a lot of people homeless because they got pinged with a marijuana citation when they were younger, so then they couldn't get a job. Then they fell

into this, and into that, and then into homelessness. I'm not an expert, but I think it's really important to understand these things when you want to try to address them, maybe to prevent further homelessness.

The third thing is not everybody who opposes having a homeless project in their neighborhood is a NIMBY. It's fair to say—particularly if it's a 'housing first' project and you have kids in school nearby—that it's not irrational to be a little worried that maybe there's someone who's out of control in the housing down the street. These are things, just alone, that make this issue really complicated.

The LA Times has done great work on this. They recently ran a couple of stories about the homeless development in South Central, and shared the story of some women who got into the development, and after several months were finally asked to leave because anti-social behavior continued. These are really difficult issues. I do think there are groups in the city—

Weingart, Community of Friends, Skid Row Housing Trust—who are really immersed in this, doing good work, and need to be consulted.

Turning to the approval by the legislature of a community redevelopment-like program—SB 5—offered by Senator Jim Beall that was vetoed by Governor Newsom. Talk about the role of CRAs and this effort by the legislature to reinstate it in some form.

I'm very supportive of the effort to reinstate redevelopment, because the tools of redevelopment are one of the few ways that cities, particularly growth areas, can leverage resources in a targeted way to affect housing affordability. What they're going to have to grapple with is one of the things that undid redevelopment in California. It was—and I don't want to say abused, because that implies malice—but it was too easy to claim blight for redevelopment funds. When the cities of Mission Viejo and Indian Wells have redevelopment agencies, something is wrong. I have the perspective of someone who started his career in Philadelphia. I like to say I know blight when I see blight, and that ain't it.

They're going to have to find a way—if

they're going to be successful—to (1) target it much more, which means there's going to be some Assembly and state Senate districts that don't have it, and (2) work out some compromise with the education establishment so it's not viewed as a raid on money that would otherwise go to education.

Share with our readers the competition for capital that often spills over into policy debates in the legislature. By example, you just noted that some of the opposition to the governor signing if SB 5 is from education interest groups who worried that the latter Bill will divert money to housing from education. Elaborate on how politics and money affect state housing policy.

You have the governor—former mayor of San Francisco—who is known for making bold policy moves. Now he's trying to do it at a state level where you have far more divergent interests. I think the jury is out—not just on housing versus education, but even within those constituencies—on how it's going to play out. Remember a few years ago, Governor Brown and the legislature, some would say, diverted money that had been approved on the ballot for mental health into pure homelessness. There is obviously overlap with mental health, but there's always going to be some tension even though all of these issues go together. Housing has been the loudest voice in the room over the past year or two, but under Governor Brown it was education by a mile, for a while.

I think what I will be looking to see is how concerns about efficiency and effectiveness play out. All this money is flowing now, but can it be implemented well? It's the same debate and discussion you saw recently with homeless dollars. I think the voters who supported this funding are going to want to see outcomes and improvement. If they're not improving, why not?

You note that—especially in the Capitol—there are many interest groups and money typically follows their siloed interests—whether they be housing, education, healthcare, the environment, criminal justice, etc. It's the local level where efforts to holistically pool state programs into place-based strategies/solutions happen, not in the State Capitol. Yet Senator Wiener's SB 50 would wrest zoning and planning authority from local decision makers to the state. Is that the place where the holistic solutions you prefer really ought to be shaped?

PI10

Unpacking California's 'Housing Affordability Crisis'

Ultimately, no. What I think the state can do—and I think it's having some effect now—is be the bully pulpit to push, prod, and ultimately incent local governments to move in a certain direction. California's too big and diverse a state to have a one-size-fits-all policy. Having said that, I think all the noise around housing now is having an impact. There's a lot more dialogue at the local level on housing than there used to be.

One of the objections I've heard from people in LA about state involvement in housing is that LA is doing a lot to address the problem and already building a lot of housing. There's some truth to that, but by prodding people to focus on this issue with the veiled threat of state intervention to penalize places like the City of Huntington Beach and 82 other cities that aren't building, I think it's having an impact. We'll have to see.

What incentives ought the state provide?

There's a range of them. The state now—because of state-passed bond measures, and some of the governor's initiatives—has a lot more money available for affordable housing. This is a sensitive one, because there are many particular suburban communities probably happy not to have any. I think they can certainly use the performance date as one criterion for awarding, or rewarding, local governments with housing resources.

Another thing, which has also come up and is sensitive, is infrastructure. A lot of homeowners groups—who aren't inherently opposed to new housing, but weary of it—agree that we need housing but argue the need for infrastructure to support it. Or, they just want or need it for transit or other things. Some of those resources come, or can come, from the state, as a 'carrot,' not just a 'stick'. There are perhaps other areas where funding is not absolute where the 'carrots' can be used to push people in a rational way to focus on more increasing the supply of housing.

If there were a new state constitutional amendment that would incent greater housing production at the local level with state financial support for locally targeted infrastructure to carry the load of new density. Would you favor it?



Rise of a residential tower in DTLA. Source: H Kerhart/Skyrise City

I like the notion of what you might describe as 'matching grants', because there are incentives on both sides. I like the idea, but I'd have to think about how you would craft that in legislation. I think something like that is worth considering. To your point—if in fact we ultimately agree that implementation is best crafted and done at the local level, that means not passing off that responsibility to the state and encouraging it through resource allocation. Otherwise, you're simply punishing the city and saying, 'do it, or else'.

“Homeowners groups...agree that we need housing but argue the need for infrastructure to support it.”

TPR interviewed US Rep. Earl Blumenauer on his report documenting the role the federal government has traditionally played in housing and asking that it reassume that role. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac privatization are also being debated. Please help put both in the context of this California housing interview.

Frankly, my view of the federal role in housing—almost regardless of which party is in power—is, at the moment, do no harm. I'm not holding out great hope that the federal government—regardless of who the president is—is going to shower money on cities or states

for housing. Second thing is, the feds are almost uniquely ill-suited to predetermine the best housing strategies at the state or local level. This administration obviously is not going to do it, and I would first focus on anything the feds are doing that is—inadvertently or otherwise—making the situation or problem worse.

Now, Fannie and Freddie is a significant issue, and it's been going on for years. Most of the focus traditionally has been about its role in the single-family mortgage market. But, in our world, Fannie and Freddie play a very

significant role in the financing and refinancing of multi-family housing. Depending on what they propose, it should be a real shot across the bow, which harms the multi-family and even affordable housing markets. This is an area that calls for rational, non-partisan thinking. Whether they are reaching out and trying to get that is not clear to me.

David Abel is the Editor-in-Chief and publisher of [The Planning Report](#), which focuses on land use issues in Southern California. He also serves on the LA County Economic Development Corporation, as well as the Urban Land Institute-Los Angeles.



LA Curbed. Source: S Davis

PERSPECTIVE | Edward Levin, RA, LEED-AP

Rethinking the Dwelling Unit Per Acre Standard

Our current housing development strategies exist in the uncomfortable space between Marshall McLuhan's aphorism,¹ "We shape our tools and thereafter they shape us," and Abraham Maslow's admonition,² "I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail."

In terms of housing development, we are still planning our cities under the zoning and urban planning paradigms of the post-WWII boom—heavily weighted toward single-family housing and reliance on fossil fuels. In an era when developable land seemed limitless, environmental impacts irrelevant, and social concerns ignorable, it was possible to believe that a simple set of zoning classifications and development tools were adequate to the task. We shaped our zoning and thereafter our zoning shaped our cities—which is to say the unintended consequences of our zoning strategies shaped our cities.

All of this is to say that our housing crisis isn't new, nor are its roots unclear. The limitations of our zoning strategies have long been clear. As the British critic Martin Pawley observed as far back as 1971, "From the street dwellers of the East to the squatters and homeless of Western metropolitan areas, evidence abounds that the provision of housing today is a stochastic process with few real winners and many, many losers."³ Pawley specifically lamented the defunding of Operation Breakthrough, the HUD program to develop prefabricated construction technologies for building subsidized housing. Since the change in federal housing programs from construction subsidies to rent vouchers in the 1980s, housing development has become only more 'stochastic,' as Pawley termed it—a random process that depends almost entirely on private, for-profit development.

Currently our primary strategy for creating more housing is to provide economic incentives for private developers in the form of a substantial number of additional market-rate units in exchange for building a nominal amount of covenanted affordable units. But with the bonus units factored in, the covenanted units account for only about 8% - 15% of the overall total, even in jurisdictions with inclusionary housing ordinances.

So to the extent we are getting housing numbers built, we're not getting the housing we most need. Our incentives may be working to some extent to increase overall numbers, but as noted above, the vast majority of the units we're building are market rate, which is our current euphemism for luxury housing. Because current market "rates" simply aren't viable for workforce housing, let alone housing for lower incomes. And given the magnitude of our current housing deficit, we cannot wait for market saturation of newer luxury units to drive down prices on older housing units. Instead we must find ways to directly incentivize moderate-income housing, similar to the incentives we provide for covenanted lower-income housing.

However, incentivizing the creation of more housing units will not by itself solve our housing problem; this is more than simply a numbers game. If we are to appropriately respond to our current housing needs, we must broaden the range of housing types and sizes we create. Beyond the conventional market rate units, our housing needs also

require larger co-housing units, smaller senior units, appropriate workforce units and live-work units. But to do so we must go beyond our current one-size-fits-all approach to residential zoning—defining density solely in terms of dwelling units per acre, irrespective of the type or nature of the units involved. It is no exaggeration to suggest that our typical dwelling-unit-per-acre standard has exclusionary effects. Whatever its merits, it has historically restricted below market rate housing to limit its impact on upper-income property values.

So among other tools, we need to examine more flexible approaches to residential density strategies that reflect a broader range of living situations and unit types. Of course questions and exhortations are easier than answers, and no single approach will be appropriate for every context.

One possible approach would be to develop a sliding scale for density per acre, based on the nature and size of the unit type. Because this approach has the inherent capacity to prioritize particular living situations and unit types, it would allow local jurisdictions to respond to individualized housing needs. But this approach also has substantial inherent loopholes when it comes to overall size and bulk. To avoid a system that could be gamed it would require careful definition of unit types, and probably some limitation on either absolute or average unit size for any given type.

Another approach would be a Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) based strategy that more strictly controls total floor area and bulk, but allows flexibility in unit density based on the nature—and therefore the size—of the unit type proposed. Because it limits overall size and massing, a FAR based approach has the inherent capacity to address typical neighborhood concerns about the scale and size of new developments. But this approach does not allow control over the quantity and type of units; the sliding scale is entirely in the hands of the developer.

It's also possible to suggest a hybrid approach—a sliding scale for FAR based on living situations and unit types. In theory, this could allow control over size and massing, while more predictably allowing flexibility in unit size and design.

In any case, breaking the rigid link between development parcel size and unit density will require a more complex approach to urban design and urban form. Instead of simply allowing abstract zoning numbers to determine the city, largely by its unintended or unexamined consequences, we must find a way to allow an idea of appropriate urban design

MARY P. WRIGHT, AICP |
VP Marketing and Membership

Progress Made



It has been a pleasure serving as APA California's Vice President for Marketing and Membership for the past two years! As I prepare to leave my post, I am thrilled to have such a capable replacement in our own Marc Yeber, who is moving

over from his post as Vice President for Public Information.

We have made much progress in aligning APA California with current issues in planning but there's much more to be done. During the past two years I have been happy to participate in a comprehensive update of our organization's strategic plan which outlines a series of activities to support our mission to make great communities happen. The strategic plan

prioritizes a number of important programs including increasing diversity in the organization and supporting the interests and needs of students and planners.

And speaking of diversity, the board took a major step forward to support diversity in the organization by transitioning the appointed position of Director of Diversity and Inclusion to the newly elected position of Vice President of Diversity and Equity. This will allow the Vice President to attend all board meetings and lead efforts to elevate diversity, inclusion and equity in the profession and practice of planning.

We were also able to fill several key positions with enthusiastic professionals who are making big contributions to the organization. We appointed two outstanding academicians to serve as our University Liaisons. Dr. Mirle Rabinowitz-Bussell of UCSD's Department of Urban Studies and Planning, and Richard M. Kos, AICP of San Jose State University's Department of Urban and Regional Planning, hit the ground running in 2018 to increase the interaction of planning schools with APA California and ensure the organization's programs and activities serve

our students and emerging planners. They have also been instrumental in creating the planning survey described below. We were also fortunate to attract Molly Wagner to the position of Young Planners Coordinator who is working to mentor and support the section Young Planners Groups (YPGs). And Elizabeth Owen from UCSD was recently appointed to be our Student Liaison to further ensure the organization meets the needs of planning students throughout the state.

This period has seen the creation and distribution of our very first State of the Planning Profession in the California survey. This comprehensive questionnaire seeks to gather input on the planning profession from planners and allied professionals throughout the state to give us a better understanding of where the profession is at and how to tailor programming and resources to meet planners' needs. As of December 2019, the survey period has closed, and the input is being analyzed. Look for details on the survey responses in early 2020.

Carry on the great work APA California! It has been an honor to serve. **MW**

AP12 Rethinking the Dwelling Unit Per Acre Standard

and urban form to determine our zoning. Simply put, our zoning should be the result of urban design study. Instead of merely calculating numbers, we need to model urban form, discuss a full range of housing needs, and thereby craft a zoning strategy that appears to offer the possibility of reflecting the city we want. Again, there won't be a single answer. Instead of the all-too-common practice of simply adopting zoning language from another jurisdiction, each city will need to examine its own needs and create the set of tools that best seems to reflect its own priorities and allows appropriate flexibility.

If we cannot manage to do this, or something substantially similar, we can expect yet more one-size-fits-all edicts from state government. We must create more housing. The only question is whether or not we will continue to treat this problem as if it were a nail.

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Edward Levin is a licensed architect and Principal for Levin-Morris Architects. Currently he serves on the Historic Preservation Commission for the City of West Hollywood and is a former Architectural Review Commissioner for the City of Beverly Hills.

Los Angeles Region Planning History Group Presents Colloquium XVI

Los Angeles' Housing Crisis: Not the First Time

Saturday, March 14 • 8:30 am - 1:30 pm

Huntington Library and Gardens
1151 Oxford Road San Marino, California

\$50 / \$25 students

On Saturday, March 14, 2020, the Los Angeles Region Planning History Group will present Colloquium XVI, which explores housing crises in Los Angeles' past and how they may inform our current discussions concerning housing. The heart of the colloquium will engage you in a facilitated discussion of strategies and policy recommendations for addressing the LA housing crisis, both current and future.

The region's first major housing crisis came during the Great Depression, reflecting both the rapid industrial build-up for war and the crush of returning G.I.s from World War II. Explore the root causes of the present housing crisis that go back the turn of the 20th Century. What threads, broad trends and lessons from past housing crises can we study and apply to address the present housing crisis?

- What are the real-world impacts of the State's past housing policies on the region?

- How has the region balanced top-down planning with local control in a world of NIMBYs and YIMBYs?
- What's the historic role of economics and changing consumer preferences?
- Is building more housing supply linked to affordability?
- What was the historic role of nonprofit affordable housing developers in the region and will they survive without incentives?
- Have past transit-oriented developments really worked in the land of the automobile?
- What mistakes did planners make in housing policy that damaged the quality of life in this region?
- Can we avoid repeating the mistakes of the past?

Registration includes continental breakfast and lunch. *For more information, visit LARPHG.*



1962



1976



1983



1989

HISTORY | MARC YEBER, (Outgoing) Principal Editor



25 Issues of Curated Content

The *CalPlanner* has been a staple of the California Chapter of the American Planning Association for nearly as long as the Chapter's existence.

Like most newsletters, *CalPlanner's* purpose has been to inform its reader of the news related to the profession and the activities relevant to its members. Since the first publication, produced under the banner *Perspective*, the Chapter's newsletter has continued to document not only the organization's programs and profiled its members, but it has also demonstrated some of the services performed and wisdom offered that best highlight planners at work.

In 2014, the Chapter undertook the task of reorganizing the content and redesigning the

layout to better frame planning issues of the day and reflect the complex work being handled by planners in communities throughout the California. In doing so, we decided to lead off each issue with a specific topic that would be the theme of that particular edition. From timely issues such as mobility and housing to climate change and disaster response, we attempted to assemble editorial content on many of the challenges facing planners today. A majority of this content has been member generated with the balance coming from outside contributors.

Regardless of the source, our objectives were three-fold: 1.) to anchor each issue with a topical theme so as to better present the information made available to our members, 2.) to share with planners the perspective, knowledge and best practices for various planning efforts currently underway, and 3.) to use this content via a searchable database as a future resource for projects on the horizon. Each of these editions has been carefully curated and organized to make them as meaningful as possible to our members and enticing to all readers.



2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019



2008



2013

PI4 *CalPlanner* Issues of Curated Content

The *CalPlanner* and its predecessors has been not only an important member service, but also an invaluable record of the organization as well as the profession in California. In fact, most of our information from the early days of the chapter comes from eight 1946-1947 issues of *Perspective*, “conceived, nurtured and matured” in 1946 by Si Eisner, the first Editor-in-Chief. It was in the 1946-47 issues, a period well before the dawn of digital platforms, that we learn that there were 102 planners associated with the early days of the Chapter. Today, *CalPlanner* is more than just a newsletter of chapter activities. It has become a valued resource tool and professional platform of information, advocacy and recognition of the planning efforts designed intentionally for our members and the broader planning community.

PI3 President’s Message

solution for inequities baked into our governing and cultural systems for generations. I hope that in 2020 we can all be open to the conversation and listen without becoming defensive. It will require us to be brave in ways we are not entirely comfortable with. I do believe that planners are sincere in their desire to improve the lives of the people they serve and that APA California and our members will continue to move in the right direction.

APA California Chapter: The Chapter and our sections accomplished a lot this year. We had a great annual conference in Santa Barbara. We increased our distance education offerings, a program that we will be expanding in exciting ways this coming year. I continue to be impressed and grateful for how hard our eight sections work to provide

professional development, networking, mentoring, and emotional support to APA California members. We conducted a membership survey to get a sense of how planners perceive the state of planning. The results will be out this year and I am anxious to see what folks said!

The profession of planning will continue to wrestle with some of our society’s most pressing challenges in 2020: climate change (water, wildfires, sea level rise) and equity (housing affordability, homelessness, poverty, rising healthcare and education costs, institutional racism and discrimination). Our members care deeply about the communities and people they serve and how these issues impact them. APA California will continue to support our members as they face these challenges (opportunities) and work to be part of the solution. **JLJ**

MARC YEBER, AICP | VP Public Information

Passing the Torch



After six years as the Principal Editor for the *CalPlanner*, this is my last issue at the helm of setting the agenda, encouraging interests and ensuring credibility with each edition of the Chapter’s long-standing and cherished publication. As of the start of 2020, I have stepped down as VP of Public Information for which the *CalPlanner* has been one of my responsibilities. The chapter’s communications now in good hands with Ellie Fiore (*Assistant Editor for this publication*) as she will step into this role. But this is not farewell as I have assumed the position of VP of Marketing & Membership for APA California.

Looking back at the previous 24 issues of *CalPlanner*, I have shepherded content that attempted to shed some light on some serious challenges facing California, while keeping you, our members, informed and updated on a myriad of news and activities both at the Chapter level, and to some extent, your local Section. I hope you found the content interesting and informative.

In wrapping up my last *CalPlanner*, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all the members who took time out of demanding schedules to contribute their knowledge and experience on the various topics. This not only includes fellow members of the Boards I have served thus far, but also the planning professionals, faculty members, allied experts and other planning savvy contributors. I am also grateful to Ellie and Carol who offered additional pairs of eyes, and Francine who made it available to our members, sometimes on short notice. But none of this would have been possible without the patience, diligence and hard work of our Managing Editor who has pulled it all together, issue after issue, and sometimes against the backdrop of other Chapter demands. So a BIG thank you to Dorina. Finally, THANK YOU members for trusting me with this platform to communicate with you. As a design professional, many of these topics offered me exposure to planning specializations I may not have otherwise been exposed . . . it is an experience for which I will always be grateful. **MY**



Opening comments at the Diversity Summit in Santa Barbara. Source: Conference photographer

DIVERSITY | Tanner Shelton, AICP Candidate

2019 Diversity Summit Takes an Introspective and Personal Look at Diversity in the Planning Profession

The California American Planning Association (APA) Conference serves as annual gathering of planning professionals from every corner of the state and from all backgrounds and walks of life to come together and to learn, connect, and discuss the most pressing issues and exciting innovations in the profession.

The 2019 Conference, held this year on California's Central Coast, was no exception, with well over 1,000 attendees convening amongst the red tiled roofs and palm tree lined beaches of Santa Barbara. Over the course of three days in September, planners attended countless seminars and sessions dedicated to exploring strategies, policies, and ideas to better serve the neighborhoods and communities of California.

While the focus on the communities planning professionals serve is of the utmost importance, this year's Diversity Summit decided to take a brief break from the profession's outward focus on the general public and instead turn inwards for a deep, long overdue reflection on our workplaces and our professional community. The summit, titled: "Representation Matters: A Panel on Diversity in the Planning Profession" gathered four professionals with differing backgrounds and varied professional experiences to examine the planning profession internally, taking an honest look at where the profession stands on diversity, inclusion, and equity and how the field can improve diversity.

The panel was moderated by Diversity Summit Co-Chair Denice Thomas, AICP, who is

a Planning Programs Section Manager in the County of Ventura Resource Management Division. After opening remarks from Julia Lave Johnston, APA Chapter President and Joel Albizo, Chief Executive Officer, APA, the summit kicked off with an opening statement by each of the four panelists. This opening statement described each of the panelist's personal experiences and professional journey as an individual in the planning profession from an underrepresented group. Each panelist's

“(Diversity Summit) turned inwards for a deep, long overdue reflection on our workplaces and our professional community.”

opening statement was personal and unique, highlighting the unique experiences and diversity of planners practicing in California. Each panelist and their opening statement is briefly summarized below:

Ali H. Mir, a multi-disciplinary planner with 17 year of professional experience, serves as APA-LA's Diversity and Inclusion Director, and is West Regional Planning Manager at STV, Inc. Mr. Mir's statement described his experiences as a Muslim and person of color from his time in university to his role as manager at private consulting firm

today, with an emphasis on how assumptions, careless comments, and dated stereotypes are still far too common in professional settings. These biases, whether intention or not, have a profound impact on planners from underrepresented backgrounds in the workplace.

Ebony McGee-Andersen, the founder of ejma Planning + Development, has had a varied career that includes extensive experience in mining and oil/gas permitting, policy implementation, and cannabis regulation. Ms. McGee-Andersen shared her struggles as a woman of color in the profession, and how she overcame these obstacles to open her own firm. Ms. McGee-Andersen shared moving stories of being the only woman of color in the room on many occasions, and how the experience was isolating, and how others often overlooked or did not recognize her ideas as valid because of her ethnicity.

James Rojas, an urban planner, community activist, artist, and founder of Place It!, a community engagement tool for visual and spatial thinkers that has facilitated over 1,000 workshops across the US for mainly underserved and disadvantaged communities. Mr. Rojas described his experiences growing up and working in disadvantaged communities in California, and how thinking outside of traditional planning paradigms can allow professionals to relate better with underserved communities, and encourage historically underrepresented groups to consider planning as a potential career.

Finally, Hemalata Dandekar, a professor and former Department Head of the City and Regional Planning (CRP) Department at

California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo, detailed her extensive international planning work and academic research. Additionally, Ms. Dandekar's personal story focused on her upbringing in India and Great Britain, and how entering the profession as a woman of color was perceived abroad and in the United States.

After each panelist shared their personal stories, panel moderator Denice Thomas led the group in an engaging and refreshingly direct conversation about inclusivity and diversity in

DEREK WONG, AICP | VP Administration

2019 Administrative Wrap Up



Thanks in large part to another successful chapter conference held in Santa Barbara in September, the chapter's finances remain strong through 2019. Revenues generated from the chapter's main sources including membership dues, conference profits, and sponsorships, remain strong for the year while operating and program expenses have been held within budget. The APA California board has been measuring progress on implementing the *2019 Strategic Plan* and is in a favorable financial position to continue efforts into 2020 with increasing member services statewide.

The *Chapter Annual Report* was completed after a one-year hiatus, and highlights our

Chapter and local Section programs as well as those of our affiliate organizations. The report provides a summary of planning news and activities, events, and member services from the past year that touches upon significant topics including National APA updates, chapter events such as the annual conference, and member activities held by each local Section. Each Chapter Board Member, Section Director, and affiliate organization contributed their respective information to showcase all that APA California Chapter has accomplished for the year while elevating the planning profession. Special thanks to all who contributed to development and production of the report which is available on the Chapter's website. Be on the look out for the next edition of the annual report in 2020.

Lastly, the Chapter Awards Ceremony

held during the Conference in Santa Barbara celebrated the best of planning. Projects and candidates were selected by a statewide jury for Awards of Excellence and Awards of Merit. Not only did each awardee receive a crystal glass trophy, the Awards of Excellence were showcased during the ceremony with introductions, an informative slide show, and presentation of the trophy on stage. Awards of Merit were also recognized during the ceremony. The list of awardees and pictures are available on the chapter's website as well as in the November issue of *CalPlanner*. The Chapter Awards Committee including Chris Pahule (Northern) and Shane Burkhardt (Southern), as well as the jurors who evaluated all of the impressive submissions, deserve a round of applause for their efforts. Suggestions for improvement to the Chapter Awards Program are always welcome. **DW**

PI6 2019 Diversity Summit Takes an Introspective and Personal Look at Diversity in the Planning Profession

the workplace and in the planning, development, and design fields as a whole. Specifically, the group discussed systematic impediments to not only diversity, but true

inclusion on the planning profession. Panelists shared ideas on how department and or firm leadership can work to promote inclusivity in the workplace through department culture

and structure, as well through improved awareness and hiring practices to encourage the hiring or underrepresented groups. The conversation concluded with departing thoughts on what the biggest benefits to more inclusive planning profession are, along with a questions and answer session.

In conclusion, this 2019 Diversity Summit allowed planners from different regions, communities, and backgrounds to take a moment to pause and to individually and collectively consider how we can strive to make our profession truly inclusive through organizational and personal changes. Moving forward, it is crucial to remember that our profession has a long way to go to be truly inclusive, as evidenced by the experiences of our colleagues and friends. As California planners, we should strive daily to make our profession better reflect the diversity of this great State and its communities.

Diversity and Inclusion Related APA Officers. From left to right: Ali Mir (LA Section), Yassaman Sarvian (Sacramento Section), Miroo Desai (VP – Diversity and Equity), Cindy Ma (Northern Section) and Tanner Shelton (Central Coast Section)



Tanner Shelton, AICP Candidate, is the Central Coast Membership Inclusion Officer for APA California.



ERIC PHILLIPS | VP Policy & Legislation

SANDE GEORGE | Lobbyist

LAUREN DEVALENCIA Y SANCHEZ | Lobbyist

Legislative Update December 2019

2019 continued to see legislative efforts focus on addressing various strategies to increase housing production. Senator Wiener's SB 50—a bill that would require approval of multifamily development near transit and in job centers—dominated much of the news coverage and public discourse during the first part of the year, but it ultimately was made a two-year bill and did not advance to the Governor in 2019. AB 1482 created statewide rent stabilization and eviction protections for tenants, and it also attracted much coverage and attention before being signed into law. In the meantime, many bills passed without the same level of attention, notably SB 330 (the Housing Crisis Act of 2019, limiting the ability to enforce certain housing regulations) and the suite of bills intended to further promote second unit development. 2019 also saw the first major effects of implementing 2018's Housing Element bills (AB 1771 and SB 828) as Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) has begun grappling with how to plan for a significantly increased regional housing needs allocation.

Lawmakers also made an effort to minimize future disasters from wildfires through Senator Jackson's SB 182, which would restrict new development in fire hazard areas and impose new development standards in areas with increased risk of wildfire where building is still permitted. Debates over how this bill would affect housing production pushed this to a two-year bill, but we expect to see it return in 2020.

Debates continue around how to finance infrastructure, community facilities, and services as we plan for increased housing supply throughout the state. Senator Beall proposed SB 5, which would have created a new financing tool for cities

and counties to help pay for infrastructure and affordable housing construction, but the Governor vetoed the bill. Meanwhile, Affordable Care Act (ACA) 1 was made a two-year bill and presents another opportunity to reform the vote requirements to make it easier to finance infrastructure and affordable housing.

Finally, AB 1483 will make impact fees more transparent and begin reporting fee information to Housing and Community Development (HCD). AB 1484 is a two-year bill intended to implement additional reforms to the impact fee process and will continue to move in 2020.

How You Can Get Involved in Shaping APA California's Legislative Positions

2020 promises to be just as active as 2019 was, and we encourage you to be involved through APA California's Legislative Review Team, whose members advise APA California on legislative positions, potential amendments and key planning policies. Information on the Review Team and sign up information are located on the APA California website legislation page. To find APA's positions on all of the major planning-related bills, and to review APA's letters on those bills, please go to the legislative tab on APA's website at www.apacalifornia.com. All position letters are posted on the APA California website "Legislation" page, [click here](#).

Legislative Webinars

APA California recently hosted two webinars that focused on implementation of the recent passage of the ADU bills (mainly AB 68, AB 881 and SB 13) and the Housing Crisis Act of 2019 (SB 330). The focus of the webinars was to

provide members with an update on the new laws in order to ensure proper implementation. Materials for the webinars can be accessed on APA California's website.

SB 50 in 2020

SB 50 (Wiener, Housing Development Incentives and Requirements), has now been amended. Upon initial review, APA appreciates the revised philosophy and structure of the amendments, which will now provide a new option for cities and counties to submit their own local flexibility plan to meet the goals of SB 50. This locally-developed compliance option is consistent with APA's legislative policies to plan for increased density in appropriate locations. The amended legislation includes many details that will need further discussion and review, which the Legislative Review Team will discuss before the Chapter takes a position on SB 50 as now amended. Below is a link to the amended version of the bill for your information.

For more information on SB 50, click here.

High Priority Bills with Positions

Below are some of the other high priority bills APA California worked on this year. Position letters for these bills are located on the APA California website. To view the full list of hot planning bills, copies of the measures, up-to-the minute status and APA California letters and positions, please continue to visit the legislative page on APA California's website at www.apacalifornia.org.

Housing and Infrastructure Bills

AB 11 (Chiu)

Redevelopment 2.0 for infrastructure to support housing

Position: Support, Status: Two-Year Bill

AB 36 (Bloom)

Rent Control

Position: Watch, Status: Two-Year Bill

AB 68 (Ting)

Major changes to accessory dwelling unit law

Position: Neutral as Amended

Status: Signed by the Governor

AB 139 (Quirk-Silva)

Emergency and transitional housing

Position: Support, Status: Signed by the Governor

AB 670 (Friedman)

Accessory dwelling units in common interest developments

Position: Support, Status: Signed by the Governor

AB 725 (Wicks)

Restrictions on above moderate housing on single-family sites

Position: Oppose Unless Amended, Status: Two-Year Bill

AB 891 (Burke)

Safe Parking Programs

Position: Support if Amended, Status: Vetoed by the Governor

PETE PARKINSON, AICP | Past-President

Reflections



This past December I prepared to depart after four years on the Chapter Board: one year as President-elect, two years as Chapter President and, now, one year as past-President. It's been an eventful four years,

personally and professionally. In 2017 we lost our home in the Sonoma County wildfires; just over two years later, we have finally moved into our fabulous rebuilt home. In addition to the personal trauma of that event—and perhaps because of that trauma—my professional focus has turned toward improving wildfire safety in our communities through better planning. I've learned a great deal about that topic over the past couple of years and have shared some of those lessons in articles for Section newsletters, *CalPlanner* and *Planning* magazine.

As I look back at my current stint on the Chapter Board (I also served as VP for Policy & Legislation from 2004-2009), a couple of initiatives stand out in my mind. The first may not be readily visible to Chapter members, but

it is vital to our organization: sound, professional financial management. APA California has grown tremendously over the years and financial systems that worked well for a much smaller organization began to feel strain as the Chapter and its Sections grew to around 7,000 members, especially in the years following the recession. We now have a budget of over \$500,000 annually, just for the state Chapter, plus a fiduciary responsibility for the Chapter's eight Sections. In 2016, we began a program of modernizing our financial management systems with new financial accounting policies and procedures, a new CPA and bookkeeper and improved continuity between the Chapter and the Sections. The Board also helped ensure that the Chapter will be on a solid long-term financial footing by adopting a new Chapter membership dues structure based on members' professional income, mirroring the dues structure already in place with APA National. Our ability to deliver outstanding member services—from conferences to legislative advocacy to professional development—depends on having a fiscally sustainable organization and I'm happy to say that these past four years have seen steady progress for APA California.

The second initiative that I'm especially proud of is the Chapter's enhanced focus on diversity and equity, both within our professional ranks and in the professional

planning work of APA California's members. This focus is certainly not new; for example, APA California has hosted a Diversity Summit at its annual conferences for a dozen years now. The Summit is very popular with conference attendees and provides an opportunity to showcase some of our profession's most innovative thinkers on diversity issues. I'm sure you've also noticed that our conferences have numerous sessions that focus on diversity and equity in one way or another. Yet, as I've attended those sessions and heard compelling stories from planners of color, women and others who are often marginalized, I could see that we've gotten very good at talking the talk, but still had (and have) a ways to go in walking the walk. It was especially apparent that we had a diversity and equity void in Chapter leadership. So, in 2018, the Chapter Board added a new voting position to the Board of Directors, the Vice-president for Diversity and Equity. In many respects this is a small step, but one that I hope brings long-term change to our profession and our professional organization.

Let me sign off by encouraging you to get involved in our professional organization at the leadership level. You'll work with some of the smartest and fun-loving people anywhere and whether your interest is in administrative issues, students, conferences, professional development or communications, you will find a niche that puts your talents to good use. See you around! **PP**

PI18

Legislative Update

AB 1250 (Gloria)

New limitations on subdivisions

Position: *Oppose Unless Amended*

Status: *Two-Year Bill*

AB 1279 (Bloom)

By right approval of housing development projects in high-resource areas

Position: *Support if Amended*

Status: *Two-Year Bill*

AB 1399 (Bloom)

Rent Control: Withdrawal of Accommodations

Position: *Support*

Status: *Signed by the Governor*

AB 1482 (Chiu)

Tenant Protection, Rent Caps, Eviction Restrictions

Position: *Support*

Status: *Signed by the Governor*

AB 1483 (Grayson)

Requirements for web posting of fees imposed on housing

developments and additional annual housing report requirements

Position: *Oppose Unless Amended*

Status: *Signed by the Governor*

AB 1484 (Grayson)

Vehicle for Fee Recommendations from HCD Fee Study and Posting Requirements for Fees Applicable to Housing Developments

Position: *Support existing fee language if amended*

Status: *Two-Year Bill*

AB 1485 (McCarty)

Prohibition on applying for state grants if jurisdiction found in violation of state housing law

Position: *Watch*

Status: *Two-Year Bill*

AB 1717 (Friedman)

Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing Funding Program Act

Position: *Support*

Status: *Two-Year Bill*

AB 1763 (Chiu)

100% Density Bonus & Other Incentives for 100% Affordable Housing

Position: *Support*

Status: *Signed by the Governor*

ACA 1 (Aguiar-Curry)

Local government financing for affordable housing and infrastructure

Position: *Support*

Status: *Two-Year Bill*

SB 4 (McGuire)

By right approval for transit-oriented development and small multifamily developments

Position: *Watch*

Status: *Two-Year Bill (was merged with SB 50)*

SB 5 (Beall)

Affordable Housing and Community Development Investment Program:

State Approved Alternative Redevelopment Process

Position: *Support*

Status: *Vetoed by the Governor*

SB 6 (Beall)

Available land database

Position: *Support*

Status: *Signed by the Governor*

SB 13 (Wieckowski)

Major changes to accessory dwelling unit law

Position: *Neutral as Amended*

Status: *Signed by the Governor*

SB 18 (Skinner)

Tenant Assistance: Keep Californians Housed Act

Position: *Support*

Status: *Signed by the Governor*

SB 48 (Wiener)

Interim low-barrier shelter housing developments

Position: *Support if Amended*

Status: *Two-Year Bill (Included in Housing Budget Trailer Bills)*

SB 50 (Wiener)

Housing development incentives and requirements

Position: *Oppose Unless Amended*

Status: *Two-Year Bill*

SB 330 (Skinner)

Housing Crisis Act of 2019

Position: *Neutral as Amended*

Status: *Signed by the Governor*

SB 592 (Wiener)

Housing Accountability Act

Position: *Oppose Unless Amended*

Status: *Two-Year Bill*



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Seeking New Sponsorship Strategies

Now that the new editorial format for the *CalPlanner* has been established, we are seeking suggestions from APA California's partners and sponsors on ways to better reach the Chapter membership. This means rethinking the traditional calling card ads for example, as well as all ad placement and associated links. So we need to hear from you on innovative ideas that would complement the new design and format while offering a more effective way to generate awareness for your business or service. We hope you will continue to support the *CalPlanner* and encourage your comments and ideas by contacting Marc Yeber at myplanning@live.com



For additional contact information, please go to www.apacalifornia.org

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Keep up to date with all the Chapter news, activities, programming and professional education as well as the State Conference by visiting the APA California website and the Chapter's Facebook page, discussion group. Also, remember your local Section's website and other media platforms are an additional resource.





CULTIVATING OUR FUTURE

2020 APA CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE
RIVERSIDE, CA | SEPTEMBER 12-15

Call for Sessions, Moderators and Speakers NOW OPEN!

Submissions Close: February 21, 2020 at 5:00 pm

IMPORTANT LINKS



- [Tracks and Topics Matrix](#)
- [Online Submission Portal](#)



The **2020 Programs Subcommittee** has been very busy organizing and reviewing the myriad of topics submitted over the past month. Thank you to all of you that submitted potential topics and look forward to the next phase in this process, where we will be seeking session proposals and speakers. While this process is a little



different than in years past, our goal is to provide a series of Session Tracks that are tailored to the many ideas and suggestions provided throughout this process. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Subcommittee Chairs

[Christine Saunders \(714-783-1863 x 706\)](#) and [Matthew Burris \(909-774-4201\)](#).

The **Mobile Workshops Subcommittee** is actively curating several mobile workshop ideas. If you have any recommendations or ideas, make sure you submit them as part of the next round of session proposal submittals expected to occur in the coming months.



The **Sponsorships Subcommittee** is actively engaging agencies, vendors, and consultants for the 2020 conference. If you would like to sponsor the event, please contact [Jennifer Lynch](#) for any of your sponsorship needs.

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