



American Planning Association
California Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

March 27, 2025

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 8140
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 609 (Wicks) California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): Infill Housing Exemption – Support

Dear Assemblymember Wicks,

The American Planning Association, California Chapter (APA California) is pleased to **support** your AB 609, which would exempt from the requirements of CEQA a housing development project that meets certain conditions. The bill would require a local government, as a condition of approval for the development, to require the development proponent to complete a phase I environmental assessment, as provided.

APA California is a non-profit organization made up of practicing planners, citizens and public officials committed to advancing the practice of local, regional, and statewide planning throughout urban, suburban, and rural California. As adopted in APA California's Legislative Platform, *Plan California*, our organization is supportive of efforts that minimize constraints to housing production.

California continues to grapple with a severe housing crisis, further compounded by the devastating fires in Los Angeles. While the Legislature has passed many changes to the housing entitlement and permitting process over the years, we believe it's important to look at other potential constraints to housing development, including CEQA's redundant review process. While regional plans, housing elements, and local zoning laws must already comply with CEQA, most individual housing projects—even those fully aligned with local zoning and objective standards—must still undergo the same review. While some projects qualify for exemptions, they often include other requirements that make them less advantageous to use.

While the intent of CEQA is to prevent negative environmental impacts, it can be a drawn-out process adding time and cost to deliver housing in existing urban areas near jobs, schools, transit and other amenities. Infill housing is proven to reduce per capita greenhouse gas emissions, but faces the same regulatory hurdles as sprawl developments that increase pollution and congestion. AB 609 removes this roadblock by exempting environmentally friendly housing projects from CEQA, provided they are in infill locations and not on environmentally sensitive or hazardous sites. These projects must still comply with local general plans, zoning ordinances, and objective standards—all of which have already undergone CEQA review. To qualify, projects must



American Planning Association
California Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

meet minimum density thresholds (15 units per acre in urban areas, 10 in suburban areas, and 5 in rural areas) and be no larger than 20 acres.

We appreciate your dedication to this important issue and for the reasons outlined above, APA California is pleased to support AB 609. If you have any questions, please contact Lauren De Valencia, Stefan/George Associates, APA California's lobbyist, at 916 443-5301, lauren@stefangeorge.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Reuben Duarte'.

Reuben Duarte
Vice President Policy and Legislation
APA California

cc: The Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee
 The Assembly Local Government Committee
 The Governor's Office
 The Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation
 The California Department of Housing and Community Development