

23 May 2016

Transmitted by email

Senator Jim Beall, District 15
Senator Steven M. Glazer, District 7
Senator Loni Hancock, District 9
Senator Jerry Hill, District 13
Senator Mark Leno, District 11
Senator Mark McGuire, District 2
Senator Bill Monning, District 17
Senator Bob Wieckowski, District 10
Senator Lois Wolk, District 3
Assemblymember Luis Alejo, District 30
Assemblymember Catharine Baker, District 16
Assemblymember Susan Bonilla, District 14
Assemblymember Rob Bonta, District 18
Assemblymember Nora Campos, District 27
Assemblymember David Chiu, District 17
Assemblymember Kansen Chu, District 25
Assemblymember Bill Dodd, District 4
Assemblymember Jim Frazier, District 11
Assemblymember Rich Gordon, District 24
Assemblymember Marc Levine, District 10
Assemblymember Evan Low, District 28
Assemblymember Kevin Mullin, District 22
Assemblymember Bill Quirk, District 20
Assemblymember Mark Stone, District 29
Assemblymember Tony Thurmond, District 15
Assemblymember Phil Ting, District 19
Assemblymember Jim Wood, District 2

RE: Support for Streamlining Affordable Housing Approvals Trailer Bill

Dear Bay Area State Senators and Assemblymembers:

SPUR is pleased to offer support to Governor Brown's proposed trailer legislation, "Streamlining Affordable Housing Approvals," which would make mixed-income infill housing development as-of-right.

SPUR (San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association) is a member-supported nonprofit organization that promotes good planning and good government. We bring people together from across the political spectrum to develop solutions to the big problems our cities face. With offices in San Francisco, San Jose and Oakland, we are recognized as a leading civic planning organization and respected for our independent and holistic approach to urban issues.

SPUR has worked for many years to develop policy proposals to address the Bay Area's high housing costs. We believe that the cost of housing in our region (as well as Southern California) is a grave threat to our social fabric. Competition for the limited housing stock is driving long-time residents out of our region.

While there are many causes of the housing crisis, chief among them is the fact that our local land use system has made it extremely difficult to add housing supply. Proposals to add housing are met with years of delay and, often, outright disapproval.

There is no way we will ever have enough money to buy everyone who wants one a subsidized affordable unit. We simply cannot address the affordability crisis unless we are simultaneously investing in housing subsidies while at the same time changing the state's planning system to bring more supply on line.

We have proven, definitively, that the current system of deferring to cities about how much housing they want to allow does not work. But cities' land use powers operate under a delegation of authority from the state. It is the responsibility of the state, under our system of government, to change the regulatory system for land use to ensure the welfare of all Californians.

Under the Governor's proposal, cities will still have great control over land use. They will still develop their own zoning. But the zoning will actually matter; there will actually be a predictable, transparent rule of law, rather than a capricious, arbitrary, and unpredictable system in which even projects that fit within the zoning are routinely rejected.

The Governor's proposal is not a panacea, but it is a practical, modest step in the right direction – one that will make a difference in the lives of millions of people.

SPUR urges you to support the proposed trailer bill on streamlining affordable and mixed-income housing approvals at infill locations in order to expand housing opportunities for California residents. In tandem with funding for permanent affordable housing, overall supply is part of the solution to California's affordability issues. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important proposal. Please feel free to contact me (gmetcalf@spur.org, 415-644-4285) or Kristy Wang, SPUR's Community Planning Policy Director (kwang@spur.org, 415-644-4884), if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Metcalf', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Gabriel Metcalf
President & CEO

CC: Kevin de León, Senate President pro Tempore
Anthony Rendon, Speaker, California Assembly
Camille Wagner, Office of Governor Brown
Ben Metcalf, Director, Department of Housing and Community Development
SPUR Board of Directors