

April 25, 2017

Office of Senator Scott Wiener  
State Capitol, Room 4066  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 35 (WIENER) – Planning & Zoning, Affordable Housing, Streamlined Approval Process - SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Wiener:

**SPUR is pleased to offer support to SB 35, which creates a streamlined, ministerial process for multi-family, urban infill projects with affordable components in jurisdictions that have not approved housing in compliance with their targets according to their regional housing needs allocation.**

SPUR 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 are respected for our independent and holistic approach to urban issues. SPUR has been involved in Bay Area housing policy for over a hundred years. One of the core tenets of our Agenda for Change is to “zone for more housing in the right places.”

It is clear that the San Francisco Bay Area and the state of California as a whole must grapple with the housing shortage and resulting lack of affordability. For the last couple of decades, California has not built sufficient housing to accommodate the number of people who want to live and work in California. As a consequence of this, we are experiencing ever-higher housing prices, growing segregation and income inequality in the most-desired places and displacement of low- and middle-income households from the places with the most economic opportunity.

SPUR supported Governor Brown’s “by-right” housing proposal last year and supports Senator Wiener’s legislation as a thoughtful response to the debate that followed. Senator Wiener has worked with stakeholders with many different priorities to arrive at this legislation, and he has clearly indicated a willingness to continue discussing how the legislation might be improved and remain an effective tool to get more housing built statewide.

This legislation does several things:

1. The legislation sets up a streamlined ministerial process for projects that is clear, reasonable, objective and timely. Approvals will not expire for projects where a majority of the units are affordable to households at 80% AMI or less.
2. It defines a set of the “right” kind of projects and the “right” kinds of places where this process could be utilized: multifamily urban infill that includes an affordable component and is consistent with the city’s existing zoning standards, located in places that are not environmentally sensitive or risky or on sites that would remove housing. Projects that use the streamlining process have limits on the amount of parking that can be required.
3. The legislation requires prevailing wage
4. The streamlined process can only be used to streamline process for projects targeted at an income bracket where the jurisdiction is NOT approving housing in line with its RHNA allocations. Jurisdictions that are approving housing in compliance with all of their RHNA allocations are exempt from offering this ministerial process.
5. The legislation distinguishes between areas where sufficient market-rate housing is being built and where it is not. If a jurisdiction is approving sufficient above moderate-income housing, but is not approving sufficient low-income housing, then only housing where the majority of units are affordable to low-income households (80% AMI) can be streamlined. If a jurisdiction is not approving sufficient above moderate-income housing, then all housing projects that provide the greater of 10% or the local inclusionary percentage of units at affordable levels (80% AMI) can use this process.
6. The legislation requires jurisdictions to submit additional information on approvals to HCD.

We believe that this bill has been thoughtfully to address many of the concerns that were raised during the by-right debate last year, and we believe that many of the adjustments improve the quality and location of projects that would earn the streamlining right. Our one concern is that all of the parameters — each of individual merit — stacked together will serve to reduce the impact of the bill. How many projects will this actually apply to? We suggest that this legislation, if approved, should be reviewed in a few years to assess the effectiveness of the streamlining provisions.

**SPUR strongly supports Senate Bill 35. This legislation preserves local control for those jurisdictions that are approving their fair share of housing and provides for a reasonable process for projects in jurisdictions that are not. While there are many reasons why the production of housing lags demand, the unpredictable local approvals process, particularly**

**in jurisdictions that lack public or political support, is surely a major one. Thank you for crafting this bill.**

Please let us know 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: SPUR Board of Directors