



June 17, 2025

Santa Barbara County of Supervisors  
105 E Anapamu Street  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Santa Barbara, California 93101

RE: State Senate Bill 676

Dear Supervisors,

The Upper Eastside Association is dedicated to the preservation of our area including our quality of life. A major component of having a healthy and thriving community is providing housing for our health care and school workers, seniors, and low-income people. Two bills are pending in the State legislature that could have an impact on the production of housing in California. **We support AB 676 unconditionally but only support AB 609 if amended.** AB 676 proposes common-sense amendments to CEQA that will streamline this process that, for controversial projects in particular, can be bogged down in the courts.

**AB 609 is attempting to do a lot of things at once, some of which are diametrically opposed to one another and are "giving away the store."** First of all, the law proposes to exempt certain housing projects of up to 20 acres. As others have noted, that is equivalent to six Costcos. Given the price of real estate and that most coastal cities, in particular, are nearing build out, that means that virtually ALL housing projects would be exempt from CEQA review. The few remaining parcels in many coastal cities are very problematic, which means that projects would be approved and built without an analysis of flooding, traffic, parking, historic resources, and/or school impacts.

We have three major concerns with AB 609 that would need to be addressed before we'd offer our support:

1. **Conformity with local or state density laws?** The bill requires conformity with local zoning and General Plans, but State Bonus Density and other permissive housing laws may also apply, which means the project could exceed local zoning and General Plan designations. Which is it? Conform to local laws or increase density, height, etc., per State laws?
2. **Exemption from CEQA without providing increased numbers of affordable units -** Usually, State legislation allows increases in density and height as a trade off for providing more affordable housing for lower income groups. This bill would exempt huge projects from CEQA with a small percentage of units' deed-restricted for low- and moderate-income groups. Over 2,000 units have been added on the South Coast since 2019, yet the increase in local rents and the cost burden on renters has continued to go

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up dramatically. Clearly, just adding market-rate housing is not helping lower income people who are steadily being priced out of our community, to the detriment of all of us.

3. **Applicability is unclear** - The most disconcerting aspect of AB 609 as drafted is that it's silent as to which projects it applies? Would it be retroactive, i.e., applicable to Builder's Remedy projects submitted over a year ago, or would it only apply to new projects submitted to jurisdictions? We obviously would suggest that the bill, with our amendments, be applicable to projects moving forward.

We are happy to support AB 676 and encourage you to work for its passage. We would like to support AB 609 but only if it addresses the three glaring problems outlined above as we've suggested.

Sincerely,



Fred L. Sweeney, Secretary Upper East Association

Fred L. Sweeney AIA

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