



Office of the Mayor

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The Honorable Buffy Wicks
Chair, Assembly Committee on Housing and Community Development
1020 N Street, Suite 156
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 2011 (Wicks) Affordable Housing and High Road Jobs Act of 2022
Notice of Opposition (As amended 4/18/2022)

Dear Assembly Member Wicks:

The City of Fremont writes to oppose your measure AB 2011, which would require cities to ministerially approve, without condition or discretion, certain affordable housing and mixed-use housing developments in zones where office, retail, or parking are a principally permitted use regardless of any inconsistency with a local government's general plan, specific plan, zoning ordinance, or regulation.

Housing affordability and homelessness are among the most critical issues facing California cities. Affordably priced homes are out of reach for many people, and housing is not being built fast enough to meet the current or projected needs of people living in the state. Cities lay the essential groundwork for housing production through planning and zoning new projects in their communities based on extensive public input and engagement, state housing laws, and the needs of the building industry. Importantly, cities are currently updating housing plans to identify sites for more than two million additional housing units.

AB 2011 disregards this state-mandated local planning effort and forces cities to allow housing developments in nearly all areas of a city. This seriously questions the rationale for the regional housing needs allocation (RHNA) process. If developers can build housing in office, retail, and parking areas, why should cities go through the multiyear planning process to identify sites suitable for new housing units, only to have those plans ignored and housing built on sites never considered for new housing?

Eliminating opportunities for public review of housing developments goes against the principles of transparency and public engagement. Public hearings allow members of the community to inform their representatives of their support or concerns. "Streamlining" in the context of AB 2011 is a shortcut around public input. While it may be frustrating for some developers to address neighborhood concerns about traffic, parking, and other development impacts, those directly affected by such projects should be heard. Public engagement often leads to better projects. Disregarding community input will increase public distrust in government and may result in additional efforts by voters to restrict growth.

The City of Fremont has been a leader in providing for urban residential and mixed-use development in our commercial areas as part of our strategically urban vision for growth. The City has well thought-out zoning standards for contextual projects, with many examples of mixed use having been built, and

others currently in review. The bill would substitute a broad zoning standard that would be inconsistent with City of Fremont development standards, providing less flexibility in some instances, and providing more intensity in other less central commercial environments. The City's Comprehensive General Plan Update, Housing Element Updates, and conforming Community Plan and Zoning updates that led to our local regulations are the product of extensive outreach and consideration for the uniqueness of our individual commercial town centers, as well as the promise of our Downtown, City Center, and Warm Springs Community Plans, and our Irvington BART Station Area Plan, all of which support the City's vision for targeted growth near transit in support of and in conformance with regional housing needs.

The City of Fremont is committed to being part of the solution to the housing shortfall across all income levels and will work collaboratively with you and other stakeholders on legislative proposals that will spur much needed housing construction without disregarding the state-mandated local planning process and important public engagement.

For these reasons, the City of Fremont opposes AB 2011.

Sincerely,



Lily Mayor
Mayor, City of Fremont