

ASSEMBLY BILL 2334 (WICKS)

AFFORDABLE HOUSING: DENSITY BONUS IN LOW-VMT AREAS

SUMMARY

This bill promotes the expansion of affordable housing units by expanding the enhanced density bonus for 100 percent affordable housing developments in location-efficient areas.

THE PROBLEM

We have seen firsthand the essential role affordable housing has played during the pandemic, providing shelter, support, and community to some of our state's most vulnerable groups—including seniors and veterans, teachers and firefighters, disabled persons and the far too many working families that cannot afford the rising cost of market rents.

If COVID has taught us anything, however, it is that we must move even more quickly and more aggressively to increase access to permanent affordable housing.

California currently has a gap of 1.2 million homes affordable to struggling lower-income households and on any given night, roughly around 150,000 people in California experience homelessness—with the numbers seeming to climb in every count.

While the most significant barrier to the construction of affordable housing is a lack of public funding, land use policies also significantly limit the amount of units that can be built.

In 2019, AB 1763 (Chiu) amended state Density Bonus law to allow 100% affordable housing developments to gain an 80% density bonus, and further allows unlimited density for developments within one-half mile of a major transit stop or high quality bus corridor.

These density bonus enhancements have significantly increased the number of units available to low-income Californian's, but there continues to be a limited number of sites across the state that can leverage these benefits.

THE SOLUTION

AB 2334 builds on the improvements in density bonus law provided under AB 1763 by creating another opportunity for 100% affordable housing developments to earn the enhanced density bonus. Specifically, this bill would:

- Further incentivize infill development by allowing 100% affordable housing developments

to have no maximum controls on density when located in a very low vehicle travel area, where the existing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita is 15% below the regional average.

- Maintain existing authority of local governments in the development approval process.
- Maintain existing maximum increase to building height limits under Density Bonus law.
- Make additional technical changes and clean up to Density Bonus law.

AB 2334 addresses the housing affordability crisis and furthers environmental sustainability goals by increasing the universe of sites available for affordable housing developments. Low-VMT areas approximate the impacts of development on regional traffic and congestion, much like existing provisions of Density Bonus law that allow for density enhancements if a project is located within one-half mile of a transit stop. Low-VMT improves on the "within a half mile" standard by incentivizing infill development and densification of urbanizing areas that may not have public transit.

SUPPORT

California Housing Consortium (sponsor)
Housing California (co-sponsor)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Lisa Engle | Chief of Consultant
Office of Assemblymember Buffy Wicks
Lisa.Engel@asm.ca.gov