



American Planning Association
California Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

Date: September 4, 2019
To: Members of the California State Assembly
From: American Planning Association, California Chapter
Subject: Support for SB 182 (Jackson) Wildfire Planning and Mitigation in Very High Fire Risk Areas

The American Planning Association, California Chapter (APA California) is pleased to support SB 182. This bill makes a number of important changes regarding planning for and permitting development in very high fire risk areas and proposes important enforcement and funding requirements.

In just two years, California has faced the deadliest and most destructive fires in California's history. Sadly, these and many other wildfires in the recent past have become the state's "new normal". **Cities and counties can and must do more to prepare. This means recasting how land use planning is done in fire-prone areas and ensuring local jurisdictions are supported with effective enforcement mechanisms and adequate funding to make critical changes.**

SB 182 will require local jurisdictions to make changes to the land use and safety elements of the General Plan to ensure proper planning so that new developments are appropriately designed and/or directed to less-hazardous areas within a jurisdiction. The bill also requires a new retrofit strategy to assist in hardening existing homes.

The bill supports California's housing priorities by encouraging more sustainable housing development practices. Communities need to meet their affordable housing needs, as state law requires and as our communities so desperately need, but they need to do it in a sustainable way that builds in long-term protection for those very same homes, including life-safety protections for the future residents.

Sound planning and effective development standards are an important element in safeguarding communities, but they are only a piece of the much bigger puzzle. Effective local enforcement programs and funding are also critical. SB 182 creates enforcement programs for new developments in order to ensure local property compliance with defensible space and vegetation management requirements are met. In addition, the bill creates a new grant program to assist small jurisdictions that contain very high fire risk areas to undertake planning activities to meet the requirements of the bill. Smaller jurisdictions are often on the frontlines of these destructive wildfires and additional funding to plan is imperative.

There is no doubt that California will continue to face more intense wildfires (and other natural disasters) in the future. Planning must be done now to protect homes and lives. All of the elements of SB 182 are critical components of the discussion that, together, we hope will better prepare our communities for the wildfires that we know will be part of California's future. For those reasons, APA California stands in strong support of SB 182 and urges an aye vote.

If you have any questions, please contact Lauren De Valencia, Stefan/George Associates, APA California's lobbyist, at 443-5301, lauren@stefangeorge.com.

cc: Senator Jackson, the Governor, OPR, Republican Caucus

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