

APA CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

APRIL 2023

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Policy Committees Begin Moving a Flurry of Bills

With the bill introduction deadline behind us, the 2023 Legislative Session is now in full swing with hundreds of bills being set in their respective policy committee(s), where they will need to pass to meet the May 5 policy committee deadline. APA California has reviewed all bills introduced and met with the APA California Legislative Review Team on March 9 to review [several](#) of interest. Nearly [400 bills](#) have been identified that will be of interest to planners this year, with several rising to higher priority. As we develop positions on bills moving in the Legislature, APA California will share [position letters](#) on important bills so stay tuned!

Legislative Themes, Old Ideas and New Proposals

A top priority of the Governor and Legislature remains addressing the housing and homeless crisis. In addition to their statements as such, we are seeing several bills proposed to continue streamlining for specific types of housing developments, in addition to focusing in on data and accountability, both in enforcement of new housing laws and as a prerequisite for any new statewide funding for programs related to homelessness – more to come on that in the future. While bills like [SB 423 \(Wiener\)](#) propose to remove the sunset on SB 35 (Wiener, 2017) to provide ongoing streamlining for multi-family developments, new ideas have emerged in [AB 1532 \(Haney\)](#) and [AB 1490 \(Lee\)](#) related to streamlining for office conversions and adaptive reuse. Other housing related bills, such as [AB 821 \(Grayson\)](#), look to address zoning consistency with the General Plan and provide streamlining for infill projects consistent with a regional Sustainability Communities Strategy.

Over the past few years, proposals have moved to address wildfire mitigation measures for new developments in WUI areas throughout the state. This year, [SB 571 \(Allen\)](#) was introduced to require evacuation route analysis and planning for all new developments in high or very high fire hazard severity zones. Taking climate resilience and hazard mitigation planning a step further and looking to also address the housing crisis, [AB 68 \(Ward\)](#) proposes to create new streamlining for housing in “climate ready” areas while potentially restricting growth in “climate risk” areas.

Additionally, with the approval of the 2022 Scoping Plan, the Legislature is also focused on implementing strategies to meet the state’s carbon neutrality goals by 2045. With that in mind, [AB 1176 \(Zbur\)](#) was recently introduced, which would require new General Plan updates to address decarbonization at the local level.

With several new members starting their first term in the Legislature and given we are at the start of a new two-year session, there are many ambitious proposals that will require vetting and discussions from a variety of organizations, including APA California. Keep in mind that bills introduced this year can in most cases still move in 2024. So many are just the start of a longer series of conversations.

CEQA Reform?

Last month the 1st District Court of Appeals ruled in the [“People’s Park” case](#) that the University of California, Berkeley failed to assess potential noise impacts from students in residential neighborhoods near the campus under CEQA when it planned new housing near the university. Immediately after, calls for CEQA reform grew louder in the Legislature. From the Governor to key legislators who are prominent in housing policy, public support for a broader look at CEQA reform has become more focused in the Capitol. That said, CEQA reform, and even tackling issues that could be considered “low hanging fruit” have often fizzled out, in favor of more targeted streamlining for specific types of projects. While we know there will be bills like [AB 1307 \(Wicks and Rivas\)](#) moving this year to target the specific issue in the People’s Park decision, it remains to be seen if broader reform will truly be on the table in 2023. Additionally, the Little Hoover Commission is currently [conducting a study on CEQA and holding public hearings to gather public input](#).

APA California’s work in the Legislature

APA California is actively engaged in many bills. In fact, we work closely with legislative and committee staff on amendments and clarifications to bills before taking a position and we also look forward to supporting several. As an organization, APA California is often asked to provide feedback on planning related bills and provide technical expertise, giving a voice to planners and an opportunity to help shape legislation. This is a valuable role that the Chapter works hard to maintain and as we speak, several discussions on proposed bills are ongoing. In addition, we frequently partner with other organizations to advocate on bills and continue to look forward to expanding our partnership network.

California’s Housing Future 2040 - The Next Regional Housing Needs Allocation

APA California was invited, and has agreed, to participate in a Sounding Board of technical experts that will be convened as part of HCD’s broader discussions to help shape their report, Housing Future 2040: The Next RHNA Initiative. This report will be submitted to the Legislature by the end of this year and it’s likely that it will shape potential legislation in the future.