



ASSEMBLY MEMBER

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## **AB 1294 – Universal Application for Home Building**

### **SUMMARY**

California faces a severe housing shortage, driven in part by slow and inconsistent local permitting processes. Before a housing project can be reviewed, applicants must submit a formal application and have it deemed “complete” by the local government, a determination that can take months or even years, and that local governments control entirely.

This matters because state housing laws tie review shot clocks to the moment an application is deemed “complete.” By delaying that determination, local governments can effectively prevent state-mandated timelines from ever starting, thus stalling projects indefinitely while remaining technically in compliance with the law.

AB 1294 closes this loophole by establishing clear, consistent standards for what constitutes a complete housing application, limiting unnecessary upfront requirements, and ensuring housing projects can move into formal review without avoidable delay.

### **BACKGROUND**

California faces a severe housing shortage, worsened by inconsistent and often burdensome local permitting practices. While state laws like the Permit Streamlining Act set deadlines for local governments to act on housing applications, many jurisdictions delay projects long before those timelines begin.

Some local governments require applicants to provide costly technical studies, detailed engineering plans, or participate in multiple

public outreach meetings before an application will be accepted for review. These requirements increase costs, create uncertainty, and delay housing production. In practice, they can be used to delay projects indefinitely without ever triggering statutory approval timelines.

### **EXISTING LAW**

Currently, local governments have wide discretion in determining what makes a housing application “complete,” leading to significant variation in permit processing times. Some cities accept applications in days; others take months or years. State law allows developers to submit a preliminary application based on standardized criteria, but no equivalent standard exists for full planning applications.

### **PROBLEM**

In some cases, obtaining a complete application determination requires expensive technical reports or multiple rounds of revisions, adding tens of thousands of dollars and years of delay to projects. Because local governments control when an application is deemed complete, they can repeatedly request additional information or reject applications as incomplete, delaying projects without ever triggering state-mandated timelines.

Across a jurisdiction, these delays compound: projects stall, developers walk away, and housing that state law was designed to facilitate never gets built. This undermines the effectiveness of state housing laws and allows housing production to be stalled indefinitely.



### **SOLUTION**

AB 1294 promotes consistency, predictability, and accountability in the housing application process by defining the information required for an application to be deemed complete and eligible for formal review. Key provisions include:

- **Clear Completeness Criteria:** Identifies exactly what information is needed for a complete application, preventing arbitrary delays.
- **No Extra Pre-Application Rules:** Cities cannot require unnecessary steps like extra studies or meetings before accepting an application.
- **Processing Protections:** Prevents delays or rejections based on requests for density bonuses or other state-granted incentives.
- **Local Flexibility:** Permits local governments to adopt their own application forms, provided they are consistent with the bill's standards.
- **State Backstop:** Allows applicants to submit a standardized application form developed by the Department of Housing and Community Development if local forms do not meet the bill's requirements.

Nothing in AB 1294 prevents a local government from requesting the information necessary to verify compliance with any state or local objective planning standards.

AB 1294 does not apply to rural jurisdictions or cities and counties with a population under 5,000.

### **SUPPORT**

- Abundant Housing Los Angeles (Co-Sponsor)
- California YIMBY (Co-Sponsor)
- California Building Industry Association
- California Business Properties Association
- California Community Builders
- California Housing Consortium
- California Housing Partnership
- Circulate San Diego
- Cypress Equity Investments
- Fieldstead and Company, Inc.
- Habitat for Humanity California
- Housing Action Coalition
- Housing California
- Inner City Law Center
- Institute for Responsive Government Action
- Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis
- MidPen Housing Corporation
- Monterey Bay Economic Partnership
- Redlands YIMBY
- SPUR
- The Two Hundred for Homeownership

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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