



COMMUNITIES FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENT established 1978




CEQA IN 2024: AN ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH BILL OF RIGHTS FOR ALL CALIFORNIANS

THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) HAS PROTECTED CALIFORNIANS FOR MORE THAN 50 YEARS. CEQA:

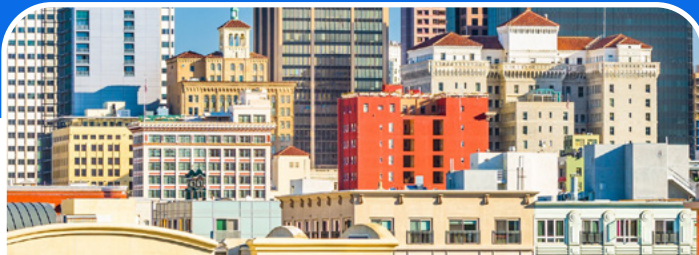
 Requires disclosure and mitigation of significant environmental impacts of public and private development projects.

 Leverages community input to make projects more sustainable, and with fewer negative impacts.

 Keeps California's air and water clean, prevents urban sprawl, and mitigates climate change.

 Provides environmental justice by helping to protect public health in California's most disadvantaged communities.

CEQA IS NOT DESIGNED TO STOP PROJECTS. IT IS DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THEM.



CEQA ENSURES NEW HOUSING IS SAFE AND HEALTHY

CEQA improves housing projects by ensuring there is an adequate water supply for new homes, sufficient fire protection services and evacuation routes, no soil contamination on site, and existing residents are not displaced.

CEQA currently streamlines or exempts a wide range of housing projects, including most multi-family housing in infill areas, farmworker housing, homeless shelters, supportive housing, transit priority projects, and other housing.

Real solutions to the affordable housing crisis exist.

- Subsidizing affordable housing
- Applying vacancy taxes
- Limiting short-term rentals
- Adopting tenant protections
- Restricting corporate land use speculation



Photo Credit: Mercy Housing and Mogavero Architects

CEQA DID NOT CAUSE THE STATE'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING SHORTAGE

Economic factors, such as high land and construction costs and high interest rates, are responsible for the shortage in affordable housing. In fact, the shortage of affordable housing is a national phenomenon. Even states with weak environmental laws are experiencing housing shortages, such as Orlando, FL; Las Vegas, NV; Portland, OR; Denver, CO; and Houston, TX.

These authorities published reports finding CEQA is not a major impediment to housing:

- UC Berkeley, School of Law (2018)
- Association of Environmental Professionals (2019)
- California Senate Committees on Judiciary and Environmental Quality (2019)
- Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment (2016, 2021, 2023)

CEQA PROTECTS CALIFORNIA'S MOST VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

CEQA is the primary tool used by residents in disadvantaged communities to promote environmental justice. For example, CEQA cases required mitigation of air pollution from the massive SCIG railyard project in West Long Beach; reductions in air and noise pollution from an Amazon warehouse in South Fresno; and meaningful analysis of cancer risks from oil drilling near homes in Kern County.

CEQA ADVANCES CALIFORNIA'S CLIMATE GOALS

CEQA is the only state law requiring developers to quantify projects' greenhouse gas emissions and to reduce significant emissions to extent feasible. For example, the vast Newhall Ranch development in LA County cut its emissions by half thanks to CEQA.

CEQA PROTECTS CALIFORNIA'S NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

CEQA protects imperiled plants and wildlife, like gold eagles and coho salmon; safeguards valuable **open space and agricultural lands**; and protects **unique historic resources and sacred tribal lands**. CEQA has protected iconic places in every corner of the state, including: Lake Tahoe, San Francisco Bay, Santa Monica Mountains and Headwaters Forest.

CEQA IMPROVES INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Before CEQA, freeways, dams, pipelines, and other large-scale infrastructure were built without regard for the environment and communities. Many results were disastrous. **CEQA completely changed public agencies' approach to infrastructure**, so that environmental and public health impacts are now reduced or avoided wherever feasible.

The Legislature has recently streamlined or exempted specified green infrastructure, such as bike lanes, rooftop solar and bus rapid transit. Exemptions should continue to be limited to truly green infrastructure and carefully crafted to minimize harm to communities and the environment.

CEQA IS DESIGNED TO BE FLEXIBLE AND NOT HINDER DEVELOPMENT

- CEQA has important safety valves built in to advance projects.
- CEQA does not require duplicative environmental review; agencies can now “tier” off programmatic documents; very few EIR’s are now required.
- Projects can be approved despite significant impacts, if agency finds “overriding considerations” outweigh environmental harm.



Protects Communities & the Environment
Safeguards Public Health
Mitigates Impacts of Climate Change

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