

# County of Santa Barbara Planning and Development

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CEQA Guidelines Update  
Governor's Office of Planning and Research  
c/o Christopher Calfee  
1400 Tenth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Email: [CEQA.Guidelines@ceres.ca.gov](mailto:CEQA.Guidelines@ceres.ca.gov)

RE: Proposed Additions to the CEQA Guidelines Implementing SB 226

Dear Mr. Calfee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Additions to the CEQA Guidelines Implementing SB 226. The County has concerns with the referenced definition for "Urban Areas" in the proposed CEQA Guidelines for Streamlining Infill Projects Section 15183.3(e)(9) which states, "Urban area is defined in Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21094.5(e)(5)."

In October 2011, Senate Bill (SB) 226 amended the definition for urban areas in PRC Section 21094.5(e)(5) to read,

(5) "Urban area" includes either an incorporated city or an unincorporated area that is completely surrounded by one or more incorporated cities that meets both of the following criteria:

(A) The population of the unincorporated area and the population of the surrounding incorporated cities equal a population of 100,000 or more.

(B) The population density of the unincorporated area is equal to, or greater than, the population density of the surrounding cities.

This amended definition effectively excludes counties throughout the state, with unincorporated urban areas and population densities which do not meet the thresholds described in PRC Section 21094.5(e)(5), from qualifying for the proposed amendments to CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.3.

Infill development is an important tool counties use to accommodate growth within unincorporated urban areas, while avoiding sprawl into the surrounding rural areas. Exclusion of unincorporated areas which do not meet certain population thresholds, in effect encourages greenfield development. Furthermore, this exclusion is contrary to the requirements of SB 375 which amended G.C. Section 65080 to require the development of a regional Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) which shall,

(i) identify the general location of uses, residential densities, and building intensities within the region, (ii) identify areas within the region sufficient to house all the population of the region, including all economic segments of the population, over the course of the planning period of the regional transportation plan taking into account net migration into the region, population growth, household formation and employment growth, (iii) identify areas within the region sufficient to house an eight-year projection of the regional housing need for the region pursuant to Section 65584.<sup>1</sup>

The SCS is required to consider unincorporated urban areas, regardless of population densities, for their potential to generate jobs, housing and associated traffic which may occur through development permitted under local land use plans and zoning. The SCS must consider the allocation of low and very low income housing units within the region consistent with the development pattern included in the SCS. As such, the County will need to accommodate these housing unit densities in unincorporated urban areas to comply with SB 375.

Based upon the proposed amendments for streamlining for infill projects in CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.3, and the associated definition for urban areas in PRC Section 21094.5(e)(5), counties will be denied the same opportunities afforded cities to expedite infill development, thus operating from a comparative disadvantage to effectively comply with the requirements of SB 375 and the SCS.

The County respectfully requests that the Office of Governor's Office of Planning and Research consider revisions to the proposed amendments for streamlining for infill projects in CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.3 which will include a definition for all unincorporated urban areas, regardless of population density. This will serve to create parity between cities and counties throughout the state as these jurisdictions strive to comply with the requirements of SB 375 and SCS, and the state Housing and Community Development Department, Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) provision for affordable housing. Additionally, these revisions will ultimately create walkable communities, reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions, and facilitate the development of affordable housing throughout unincorporated areas of the state.

The County looks forward to continued dialogue on this initiative. If you should have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office directly, or Jeff Hunt, Director of Long Range Planning, at (805) 568-2072.

Sincerely,



Glenn Russell, Ph.D.  
Director, Planning and Development Department

<sup>1</sup> G.C. Section 65080(b)(2)(B)(i)(ii)(iii).