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AB-434 Housing element: notice of violation. (2023-2024)

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Assembly Bill No. 434

CHAPTER 740

An act to amend Section 65585 of the Government Code, relating to housing.

[Approved by Governor October 11, 2023. Filed with Secretary of State October 11, 2023.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 434, Grayson. Housing element: notice of violation.

(1) Existing law requires each county and city to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and specified land outside its boundaries, that includes, among other mandatory elements, a housing element. Upon adoption of a housing element or amendment to an adopted housing element, existing law requires the planning agency to submit a copy to the Department of Housing and Community Development, as provided, and requires the department to evaluate the adopted housing element or amendment and report its findings to the planning agency within 90 days.

This bill would, instead, require the department to review an adopted housing element or amendment and report its findings to the local planning agency within 60 days.

(2) Existing law, the Planning and Zoning Law, except as provided, requires that a public hearing be held on an application for a variance from the requirements of a zoning ordinance, an application for a conditional use permit or equivalent development permit, a proposed revocation or modification of a variance or use permit or equivalent development permit, or an appeal from the action taken on any of those applications. That law, for housing development projects that submit a preliminary application prior to January 1, 2030, prohibits a city or county from conducting more than 5 hearings, as defined, held pursuant to these provisions, or any other law, ordinance, or regulation requiring a public hearing, if the proposed housing development project complies with the applicable, objective general plan and zoning standards in effect at the time an application is deemed complete, as defined.

The Planning and Zoning Law also requires a local agency, pursuant to either local ordinance or statute, to provide for ministerial approval of applications for accessory dwelling units or junior accessory dwelling units in areas zoned for residential use, as specified. That law prohibits a local agency from denying a permit for an unpermitted accessory dwelling unit constructed prior to January 1, 2018, except as provided. That law also requires each local agency to allow an accessory dwelling unit to be sold or conveyed separately from the primary residence to a qualified buyer if specified conditions are met.

The Planning and Zoning Law requires that a proposed housing development containing no more than 2 residential units within a single-family residential zone be considered ministerially, without discretionary review or hearing, if the proposed housing development meets certain requirements.

Existing planning and zoning law requires a local agency to ministerially approve a parcel map for an urban lot split if the agency determines the parcel map meets specified criteria, except as provided.

Existing law, the Middle Class Housing Act of 2022, deems a housing development project, as defined, to be an allowable use on a parcel that is within a zone where office, retail, or parking are a principally permitted use, if specified conditions are met, including requirements relating to density, public notice, comment, hearing, or other procedures, site location and size, consistency with sustainable community strategy or alternative plans, prevailing wage, and a skilled and trained workforce.

Statutory law proposed by SB 4 would require that a housing development project be a use by right upon the request of an applicant who submits an application for streamlined approval, on any land owned by an independent institution of higher education or religious institution on or before January 1, 2024, if the development satisfies specified criteria.

Statutory law proposed by AB 1218 would prohibit an affected city or an affected county, as those terms are defined, from approving a housing development project that will require the demolition of one or more residential dwelling units unless the project will create at least as many residential dwelling units as will be demolished.

Statutory law proposed by SB 684 would prohibit a local agency from imposing specified objective zoning standards, objective subdivision standards, or objective design standards on a housing development on a lot that is subdivided, except as provided, would require a local agency to issue a building permit for a housing development project on a proposed site to be subdivided if the applicant for the permit has met specified requirements, and would require a local agency to ministerially approve, without discretionary review or a hearing, a parcel map or a tentative and final map for a housing development project that meets specified requirements.

Existing law requires the Department of Housing and Community Development to notify a city, county, or city and county, and authorizes the department to notify the Attorney General, that a city, county, or city and county is in violation of state law if the department finds that the housing element or an amendment to that element, or any specified action or failure to act, does not substantially comply with the law as it pertains to housing elements or that any local government has taken an action in violation of certain housing laws.

This bill would additionally authorize the department to notify a city, county, city and county, or the Attorney General when the planning agency of a city, county, or city and county fails to comply with the above-described provisions relating to hearings for specified variances, ministerial approval of applications for accessory dwelling units or junior accessory dwelling units, permitting for unpermitted accessory dwelling units constructed prior to January 1, 2018, sale or conveyance of accessory dwelling units, ministerial approval of proposed housing developments, ministerial approval of parcel maps for urban lot splits, or housing development projects being deemed an allowable use of parcels within a zone where office, retail, or parking are a principally permitted use, as provided. This bill would also authorize the department to make the above-referenced notifications if a city, county, or city and county fails to comply with the above-described provisions relating to a housing development project being a use by right on land owned by an independent institution of higher education or religious institution, as proposed by SB 4; approval of housing development projects that require the demolition of residential dwelling units, as proposed by AB 1218; or the prohibition against imposition of specified objective zoning, subdivision, or design standards, required issuance of a building permit for housing development projects on proposed sites to be subdivided, or required ministerial approval of a parcel map or a tentative and final map for a housing development project that meets specified requirements, as proposed by AB 684.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 65585 of the Government Code is amended to read:

65585. (a) In the preparation of its housing element, each city and county shall consider the guidelines adopted by the department pursuant to Section 50459 of the Health and Safety Code. Those guidelines shall be advisory to each city or county in the preparation of its housing element.

(b) (1) At least 90 days prior to adoption of a revision of its housing element pursuant to subdivision (e) of Section 65588, or at least 60 days prior to the adoption of a subsequent amendment to this element, the planning agency shall submit a draft element revision or draft amendment to the department. The local government of the planning agency shall make the first draft revision of a housing element available for public comment for at least 30 days and, if any comments are received, the local government shall take at least 10 business days after the 30-day public comment period to consider and incorporate public comments into the draft revision prior to submitting it to the department. For any subsequent draft revision, the local government shall post the draft revision on its internet website and shall email a link to the draft revision to all individuals and organizations that have previously requested notices relating to the local government's housing element at least seven days before submitting the draft revision to the department.

(2) The planning agency staff shall collect and compile the public comments regarding the housing element received by the city, county, or city and county and provide these comments to each member of the legislative body before it adopts the housing

element.

(3) The department shall review the draft and report its written findings to the planning agency within 90 days of its receipt of the first draft submittal for each housing element revision pursuant to subdivision (e) of Section 65588 or within 60 days of its receipt of a subsequent draft amendment or an adopted revision or adopted amendment to an element. The department shall not review the first draft submitted for each housing element revision pursuant to subdivision (e) of Section 65588 until the local government has made the draft available for public comment for at least 30 days and, if comments were received, has taken at least 10 business days to consider and incorporate public comments pursuant to paragraph (1).

(c) In the preparation of its findings, the department may consult with any public agency, group, or person. The department shall receive and consider any written comments from any public agency, group, or person regarding the draft or adopted element or amendment under review.

(d) In its written findings, the department shall determine whether the draft element or draft amendment substantially complies with this article.

(e) Prior to the adoption of its draft element or draft amendment, the legislative body shall consider the findings made by the department. If the department's findings are not available within the time limits set by this section, the legislative body may act without them.

(f) If the department finds that the draft element or draft amendment does not substantially comply with this article, the legislative body shall take one of the following actions:

(1) Change the draft element or draft amendment to substantially comply with this article.

(2) Adopt the draft element or draft amendment without changes. The legislative body shall include in its resolution of adoption written findings that explain the reasons the legislative body believes that the draft element or draft amendment substantially complies with this article despite the findings of the department.

(g) Promptly following the adoption of its element or amendment, the planning agency shall submit a copy to the department.

(h) The department shall, within 60 days, review adopted housing elements or amendments and report its findings to the planning agency.

(i) (1) (A) The department shall review any action or failure to act by the city, county, or city and county that it determines is inconsistent with an adopted housing element or Section 65583, including any failure to implement any program actions included in the housing element pursuant to Section 65583. The department shall issue written findings to the city, county, or city and county as to whether the action or failure to act substantially complies with this article, and provide a reasonable time no longer than 30 days for the city, county, or city and county to respond to the findings before taking any other action authorized by this section, including the action authorized by subparagraph (B).

(B) If the department finds that the action or failure to act by the city, county, or city and county does not substantially comply with this article, and if it has issued findings pursuant to this section that an amendment to the housing element substantially complies with this article, the department may revoke its findings until it determines that the city, county, or city and county has come into compliance with this article.

(2) The department may consult with any local government, public agency, group, or person, and shall receive and consider any written comments from any public agency, group, or person, regarding the action or failure to act by the city, county, or city and county described in paragraph (1), in determining whether the housing element substantially complies with this article.

(j) The department shall notify the city, county, or city and county and may notify the office of the Attorney General that the city, county, or city and county is in violation of state law if the department finds that the housing element or an amendment to this element, or any action or failure to act described in subdivision (i), does not substantially comply with this article or that any local government has taken an action in violation of the following:

(1) Housing Accountability Act (Section 65589.5).

(2) Section 65863.

(3) Chapter 4.3 (commencing with Section 65915).

(4) Section 65008.

(5) Housing Crisis Act of 2019 (Chapter 654, Statutes of 2019, Sections 65941.1, 65943, and 66300).

- (6) Section 8899.50.
- (7) Section 65913.4.
- (8) Article 11 (commencing with Section 65650).
- (9) Article 12 (commencing with Section 65660).
- (10) Section 65913.11.
- (11) Section 65400.
- (12) Section 65863.2.
- (13) Chapter 4.1 (commencing with Section 65912.100).
- (14) Section 65905.5.
- (15) Section 65852.2.
- (16) Section 65852.21.
- (17) Section 65852.22.
- (18) Section 65852.23.
- (19) Section 65852.24.
- (20) Section 65852.26.
- (21) Section 66411.7.
- (22) Section 65913.16.
- (23) Article 2 (commencing with Section 66300.5) of Chapter 12.
- (24) Section 65852.28.
- (25) Section 65913.4.5.
- (26) Section 66499.41.

(k) Commencing July 1, 2019, prior to the Attorney General bringing any suit for a violation of the provisions identified in subdivision (j) related to housing element compliance and seeking remedies available pursuant to this subdivision, the department shall offer the jurisdiction the opportunity for two meetings in person or via telephone to discuss the violation, and shall provide the jurisdiction written findings regarding the violation. This paragraph does not affect any action filed prior to the effective date of this section. The requirements set forth in this subdivision do not apply to any suits brought for a violation or violations of paragraphs (1) and (3) to (9), inclusive, of subdivision (j).

(l) In any action or special proceeding brought by the Attorney General relating to housing element compliance pursuant to a notice or referral under subdivision (j), the Attorney General may request, upon a finding of the court that the housing element does not substantially comply with the requirements of this article pursuant to this section, that the court issue an order or judgment directing the jurisdiction to bring its housing element into substantial compliance with the requirements of this article. The court shall retain jurisdiction to ensure that its order or judgment is carried out. If a court determines that the housing element of the jurisdiction substantially complies with this article, it shall have the same force and effect, for purposes of eligibility for any financial assistance that requires a housing element in substantial compliance and for purposes of any incentives provided under Section 65589.9, as a determination by the department that the housing element substantially complies with this article.

(1) If the jurisdiction has not complied with the order or judgment after 12 months, the court shall conduct a status conference. Following the status conference, upon a determination that the jurisdiction failed to comply with the order or judgment compelling substantial compliance with the requirements of this article, the court shall impose fines on the jurisdiction, which shall be deposited into the Building Homes and Jobs Trust Fund. Any fine levied pursuant to this paragraph shall be in a minimum amount of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) per month, but shall not exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) per month, except as provided in paragraphs (2) and (3). In the event that the jurisdiction fails to pay fines imposed by the court in full and on time, the court may require the Controller to intercept any available state and local funds and direct such funds to the Building Homes and Jobs Trust Fund to correct the jurisdiction's failure to pay. The intercept of the funds by the Controller for this purpose shall not violate any provision of the California Constitution.

(2) If the jurisdiction has not complied with the order or judgment after three months following the imposition of fees described in paragraph (1), the court shall conduct a status conference. Following the status conference, if the court finds that the fees imposed pursuant to paragraph (1) are insufficient to bring the jurisdiction into compliance with the order or judgment, the court may multiply the fine determined pursuant to paragraph (1) by a factor of three. In the event that the jurisdiction fails to pay fines imposed by the court in full and on time, the court may require the Controller to intercept any available state and local funds and direct such funds to the Building Homes and Jobs Trust Fund to correct the jurisdiction's failure to pay. The intercept of the funds by the Controller for this purpose shall not violate any provision of the California Constitution.

(3) If the jurisdiction has not complied with the order or judgment six months following the imposition of fees described in paragraph (1), the court shall conduct a status conference. Upon a determination that the jurisdiction failed to comply with the order or judgment, the court may impose the following:

(A) If the court finds that the fees imposed pursuant to paragraphs (1) and (2) are insufficient to bring the jurisdiction into compliance with the order or judgment, the court may multiply the fine determined pursuant to paragraph (1) by a factor of six. In the event that the jurisdiction fails to pay fines imposed by the court in full and on time, the court may require the Controller to intercept any available state and local funds and direct such funds to the Building Homes and Jobs Trust Fund to correct the jurisdiction's failure to pay. The intercept of the funds by the Controller for this purpose shall not violate any provision of the California Constitution.

(B) The court may order remedies available pursuant to Section 564 of the Code of Civil Procedure, under which the agent of the court may take all governmental actions necessary to bring the jurisdiction's housing element into substantial compliance pursuant to this article in order to remedy identified deficiencies. The court shall determine whether the housing element of the jurisdiction substantially complies with this article and, once the court makes that determination, it shall have the same force and effect, for all purposes, as the department's determination that the housing element substantially complies with this article. An agent appointed pursuant to this paragraph shall have expertise in planning in California.

(4) This subdivision does not limit a court's discretion to apply any and all remedies in an action or special proceeding for a violation of any law identified in subdivision (j).

(m) In determining the application of the remedies available under subdivision (l), the court shall consider whether there are any mitigating circumstances delaying the jurisdiction from coming into compliance with state housing law. The court may consider whether a city, county, or city and county is making a good faith effort to come into substantial compliance or is facing substantial undue hardships.

(n) Nothing in this section shall limit the authority of the office of the Attorney General to bring a suit to enforce state law in an independent capacity. The office of the Attorney General may seek all remedies available under law including those set forth in this section.

(o) Notwithstanding Sections 11040 and 11042, if the Attorney General declines to represent the department in any action or special proceeding brought pursuant to a notice or referral under subdivision (j), the department may appoint or contract with other counsel for purposes of representing the department in the action or special proceeding.

(p) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the statute of limitations set forth in subdivision (a) of Section 338 of the Code of Civil Procedure shall apply to any action or special proceeding brought by the office of the Attorney General or pursuant to a notice or referral under subdivision (j), or by the department pursuant to subdivision (o).