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SB-450 Housing development: approvals. (2023-2024)

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Senate Bill No. 450

CHAPTER 286

An act to amend Sections 65852.21 and 66411.7 of the Government Code, and to amend Section 4 of Chapter 162 of the Statutes of 2021, relating to land use.

[Approved by Governor September 19, 2024. Filed with Secretary of State September 19, 2024.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 450, Atkins. Housing development: approvals.

(1) The Planning and Zoning law requires a proposed housing development containing no more than 2 residential units within a single-family residential zone to be considered ministerially, without discretionary review or hearing, if the proposed housing development meets certain requirements, including that the proposed housing development does not allow for the demolition of more than 25% of the existing exterior structural walls, except as provided. Existing law authorizes a local agency to impose objective zoning standards, objective subdivision standards, and objective design standards, as defined, except as specified, on the proposed housing development. Existing law authorizes a local agency to deny a proposed housing development if specified conditions are met, including that the building official makes a written finding that the proposed housing development project would have a specific, adverse impact upon public health and safety or the physical environment, as provided.

This bill would remove the requirement that a proposed housing development does not allow for the demolition of more than 25% of the existing exterior structural walls to be considered ministerially. The bill would prohibit a local agency from imposing objective zoning standards, objective subdivision standards, and objective design standards that do not apply uniformly to development within the underlying zone, but would specify that these provisions do not prohibit a local agency from adopting or imposing objective zoning standards, objective subdivision standards, and objective design standards on the development if the standards are more permissive than applicable standards within the underlying zone. The bill would remove the authorization for a local agency to deny a proposed housing development if the building official makes a written finding that the proposed housing development project would have a specific, adverse impact upon the physical environment. The bill would require the local agency to consider and approve or deny the proposed housing development application within 60 days from the date the local agency receives the completed application, and would deem the application approved after that time. The bill would require a permitting agency, if it denies an application, to provide a full set of comments to the applicant with a list of items that are defective or deficient and a description of how the application can be remedied by the applicant.

(2) The Subdivision Map Act vests the authority to regulate and control the design and improvement of subdivisions in the legislative body of a local agency and sets forth procedures governing the local agency's processing, approval, conditional approval or disapproval, and filing of tentative, final, and parcel maps, and the modification of those maps.

Existing law requires a local agency to ministerially approve a parcel map for an urban lot split that meets certain requirements. Existing law authorizes a local agency to impose objective zoning standards, objective subdivision standards, and objective design standards, as defined, except as specified. Existing law authorizes a local agency to deny an urban lot split if specified

conditions are met, including that the building official makes a written finding that the proposed housing development project would have a specific, adverse impact upon public health and safety or the physical environment, as provided.

This bill would specify that objective zoning standards, objective subdivision standards, and objective design standards imposed by a local agency must be related to the design or improvements of a parcel. This bill would remove the authorization for a local agency to deny a proposed housing development if the building official makes a written finding that the proposed housing development project would have a specific, adverse impact upon the physical environment. The bill would require the local agency to consider and approve or deny the proposed housing development application within 60 days from the date the local agency receives the completed application, and would deem the application approved after that time. The bill would require a permitting agency, if it denies an application, to provide a full set of comments to the applicant with a list of items that are defective or deficient and a description of how the application can be remedied by the applicant.

(3) This bill would make additional nonsubstantive and conforming changes to these provisions.

(4) The bill would include findings related to changes proposed by this bill and would amend certain findings in existing law to state that the provisions address a matter of statewide concern rather than a municipal affair and, therefore, apply to all cities, including charter cities.

(5) By increasing the duties of local agencies with respect to land use regulations, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

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

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

SECTION 1. Section 65852.21 of the Government Code is amended to read:

65852.21. (a) A proposed housing development containing no more than two residential units within a single-family residential zone shall be considered ministerially, without discretionary review or a hearing, if the proposed housing development meets all of the following requirements:

(1) The parcel subject to the proposed housing development is located within a city, the boundaries of which include some portion of either an urbanized area or urban cluster, as designated by the United States Census Bureau, or, for unincorporated areas, a legal parcel wholly within the boundaries of an urbanized area or urban cluster, as designated by the United States Census Bureau.

(2) The parcel satisfies the requirements specified in subparagraphs (B) to (K), inclusive, of paragraph (6) of subdivision (a) of Section 65913.4, as that section read on September 16, 2021.

(3) Notwithstanding any provision of this section or any local law, the proposed housing development would not require demolition or alteration of any of the following types of housing:

(A) Housing that is subject to a recorded covenant, ordinance, or law that restricts rents to levels affordable to persons and families of moderate, low, or very low income.

(B) Housing that is subject to any form of rent or price control through a public entity's valid exercise of its police power.

(C) Housing that has been occupied by a tenant in the last three years.

(4) The parcel subject to the proposed housing development is not a parcel on which an owner of residential real property has exercised the owner's rights under Chapter 12.75 (commencing with Section 7060) of Division 7 of Title 1 to withdraw accommodations from rent or lease within 15 years before the date that the development proponent submits an application.

(5) The development is not located within a historic district or property included on the State Historic Resources Inventory, as defined in Section 5020.1 of the Public Resources Code, or within a site that is designated or listed as a city or county landmark or historic property or district pursuant to a city or county ordinance.

(b) (1) Notwithstanding any local law and except as provided in paragraphs (2) and (3), a local agency may impose objective zoning standards, objective subdivision standards, and objective design review standards that do not conflict with this section.

(2) (A) The local agency shall not impose objective zoning standards, objective subdivision standards, and objective design standards that would have the effect of physically precluding the construction of up to two units or that would physically preclude either of the two units from being at least 800 square feet in floor area.

(B) (i) Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), no setback shall be required for an existing structure or a structure constructed in the same location and to the same dimensions as an existing structure.

(ii) Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), in all other circumstances not described in clause (i), a local agency may require a setback of up to four feet from the side and rear lot lines.

(3) A local agency shall not impose objective zoning standards, objective subdivision standards, and objective design standards that do not apply uniformly to development within the underlying zone. This subdivision shall not prevent a local agency from adopting or imposing objective zoning standards, objective subdivision standards, and objective design standards on development authorized by this section if those standards are more permissive than applicable standards within the underlying zone.

(c) In addition to any conditions established in accordance with subdivision (b), a local agency may require any of the following conditions when considering an application for two residential units as provided for in this section:

(1) Offstreet parking of up to one space per unit, except that a local agency shall not impose parking requirements in either of the following instances:

(A) The parcel is located within one-half mile walking distance of either a high-quality transit corridor, as defined in subdivision (b) of Section 21155 of the Public Resources Code, or a major transit stop, as defined in Section 21064.3 of the Public Resources Code.

(B) There is a car share vehicle located within one block of the parcel.

(2) For residential units connected to an onsite wastewater treatment system, a percolation test completed within the last 5 years, or, if the percolation test has been recertified, within the last 10 years.

(d) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a local agency may deny a proposed housing development project if the building official makes a written finding, based upon a preponderance of the evidence, that the proposed housing development project would have a specific, adverse impact, as defined and determined in paragraph (2) of subdivision (d) of Section 65589.5, upon public health and safety for which there is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the specific, adverse impact.

(e) A local agency shall require that a rental of any unit created pursuant to this section be for a term longer than 30 days.

(f) Notwithstanding Article 2 (commencing with Section 66314) or Article 3 (commencing with Section 66333) of Chapter 13, a local agency shall not be required to permit an accessory dwelling unit or a junior accessory dwelling unit on parcels that use both the authority contained within this section and the authority contained in Section 66411.7.

(g) Notwithstanding subparagraph (B) of paragraph (2) of subdivision (b), an application shall not be rejected solely because it proposes adjacent or connected structures provided that the structures meet building code safety standards and are sufficient to allow separate conveyance.

(h) (1) An application for a proposed housing development pursuant to this section shall be considered and approved or denied within 60 days from the date the local agency receives a completed application. If the local agency has not approved or denied the completed application within 60 days, the application shall be deemed approved.

(2) If a permitting agency denies an application for a proposed housing development pursuant to paragraph (1), the permitting agency shall, within the time period described in paragraph (1), return in writing a full set of comments to the applicant with a list of items that are defective or deficient and a description of how the application can be remedied by the applicant.

(i) Local agencies shall include units constructed pursuant to this section in the annual housing element report as required by subparagraph (l) of paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 65400.

(j) For purposes of this section, all of the following apply:

(1) A housing development contains two residential units if the development proposes no more than two new units or if it proposes to add one new unit to one existing unit.

(2) The terms "objective zoning standards," "objective subdivision standards," and "objective design review standards" mean standards that involve no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and are uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant or proponent and the

public official prior to submittal. These standards may be embodied in alternative objective land use specifications adopted by a local agency, and may include, but are not limited to, housing overlay zones, specific plans, inclusionary zoning ordinances, and density bonus ordinances.

(3) "Local agency" means a city, county, or city and county, whether general law or chartered.

(k) A local agency may adopt an ordinance to implement the provisions of this section. An ordinance adopted to implement this section shall not be considered a project under Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000) of the Public Resources Code.

(l) Nothing in this section shall be construed to supersede or in any way alter or lessen the effect or application of the California Coastal Act of 1976 (Division 20 (commencing with Section 30000) of the Public Resources Code), except that the local agency shall not be required to hold public hearings for coastal development permit applications for a housing development pursuant to this section.

SEC. 2. Section 66411.7 of the Government Code is amended to read:

66411.7. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this division and any local law, a local agency shall ministerially approve, as set forth in this section, a parcel map for an urban lot split only if the local agency determines that the parcel map for the urban lot split meets all the following requirements:

(1) The parcel map subdivides an existing parcel to create no more than two new parcels of approximately equal lot area provided that one parcel shall not be smaller than 40 percent of the lot area of the original parcel proposed for subdivision.

(2) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), both newly created parcels are no smaller than 1,200 square feet.

(B) A local agency may by ordinance adopt a smaller minimum lot size subject to ministerial approval under this subdivision.

(3) The parcel being subdivided meets all the following requirements:

(A) The parcel is located within a single-family residential zone.

(B) The parcel subject to the proposed urban lot split is located within a city, the boundaries of which include some portion of either an urbanized area or urban cluster, as designated by the United States Census Bureau, or, for unincorporated areas, a legal parcel wholly within the boundaries of an urbanized area or urban cluster, as designated by the United States Census Bureau.

(C) The parcel satisfies the requirements specified in subparagraphs (B) to (K), inclusive, of paragraph (6) of subdivision (a) of Section 65913.4, as that section read on September 16, 2021.

(D) The proposed urban lot split would not require demolition or alteration of any of the following types of housing:

(i) Housing that is subject to a recorded covenant, ordinance, or law that restricts rents to levels affordable to persons and families of moderate, low, or very low income.

(ii) Housing that is subject to any form of rent or price control through a public entity's valid exercise of its police power.

(iii) A parcel or parcels on which an owner of residential real property has exercised the owner's rights under Chapter 12.75 (commencing with Section 7060) of Division 7 of Title 1 to withdraw accommodations from rent or lease within 15 years before the date that the development proponent submits an application.

(iv) Housing that has been occupied by a tenant in the last three years.

(E) The parcel is not located within a historic district or property included on the State Historic Resources Inventory, as defined in Section 5020.1 of the Public Resources Code, or within a site that is designated or listed as a city or county landmark or historic property or district pursuant to a city or county ordinance.

(F) The parcel has not been established through prior exercise of an urban lot split as provided for in this section.

(G) Neither the owner of the parcel being subdivided nor any person acting in concert with the owner has previously subdivided an adjacent parcel using an urban lot split as provided for in this section.

(b) An application for a parcel map for an urban lot split shall be approved in accordance with the following requirements:

(1) (A) A local agency shall approve or deny an application for a parcel map for an urban lot split ministerially without discretionary review.

(B) An application for an urban lot split shall be considered and approved or denied within 60 days from the date the local agency receives a completed application. If the local agency has not approved or denied the completed application within 60 days, the application shall be deemed approved.

(C) If a permitting agency denies an application for an urban lot split pursuant to subparagraph (B), the permitting agency shall, within the time period described in subparagraph (B), return in writing a full set of comments to the applicant with a list of items that are defective or deficient and a description of how the application can be remedied by the applicant.

(2) A local agency shall approve an urban lot split only if it conforms to all applicable objective requirements of the Subdivision Map Act (Division 2 (commencing with Section 66410)), except as otherwise expressly provided in this section.

(3) Notwithstanding Section 66411.1, a local agency shall not impose regulations that require dedications of rights-of-way or the construction of offsite improvements for the parcels being created as a condition of issuing a parcel map for an urban lot split pursuant to this section.

(c) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), notwithstanding any local law, a local agency may impose objective zoning standards, objective subdivision standards, and objective design review standards that are related to the design or to improvements of a parcel, consistent with paragraph (3) of subdivision (b) and with subdivision (e), and are applicable to a parcel created by an urban lot split that do not conflict with this section.

(2) A local agency shall not impose objective zoning standards, objective subdivision standards, and objective design review standards that would have the effect of physically precluding the construction of two units on either of the resulting parcels or that would result in a unit size of less than 800 square feet.

(3) (A) Notwithstanding paragraph (2), no setback shall be required for an existing structure or a structure constructed in the same location and to the same dimensions as an existing structure.

(B) Notwithstanding paragraph (2), in all other circumstances not described in subparagraph (A), a local agency may require a setback of up to four feet from the side and rear lot lines.

(d) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a local agency may deny an urban lot split if the building official makes a written finding, based upon a preponderance of the evidence, that the proposed housing development project would have a specific, adverse impact, as defined and determined in paragraph (2) of subdivision (d) of Section 65589.5, upon public health and safety for which there is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the specific, adverse impact.

(e) In addition to any conditions established in accordance with this section, a local agency may require any of the following conditions when considering an application for a parcel map for an urban lot split:

(1) Easements required for the provision of public services and facilities.

(2) A requirement that the parcels have access to, provide access to, or adjoin the public right-of-way.

(3) Offstreet parking of up to one space per unit, except that a local agency shall not impose parking requirements in either of the following instances:

(A) The parcel is located within one-half mile walking distance of either a high-quality transit corridor as defined in subdivision (b) of Section 21155 of the Public Resources Code, or a major transit stop as defined in Section 21064.3 of the Public Resources Code.

(B) There is a car share vehicle located within one block of the parcel.

(f) A local agency shall require that the uses allowed on a lot created by this section be limited to residential uses.

(g) (1) A local agency shall require an applicant for an urban lot split to sign an affidavit stating that the applicant intends to occupy one of the housing units as their principal residence for a minimum of three years from the date of the approval of the urban lot split.

(2) This subdivision shall not apply to an applicant that is a "community land trust," as defined in clause (ii) of subparagraph (C) of paragraph (11) of subdivision (a) of Section 402.1 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, or is a "qualified nonprofit corporation" as described in Section 214.15 of the Revenue and Taxation Code.

(3) A local agency shall not impose additional owner occupancy standards, other than provided for in this subdivision, on an urban lot split pursuant to this section.

(h) A local agency shall require that a rental of any unit created pursuant to this section be for a term longer than 30 days.

(i) A local agency shall not require, as a condition for ministerial approval of a parcel map application for the creation of an urban lot split, the correction of nonconforming zoning conditions.

(j) (1) Notwithstanding any provision of Section 65852.21, 65915, Article 2 (commencing with Section 66314) or Article 3 (commencing with Section 66333) of Chapter 13 of Division 1, or this section, a local agency shall not be required to permit more than two units on a parcel created through the exercise of the authority contained within this section.

(2) For the purposes of this section, "unit" means any dwelling unit, including, but not limited to, a unit or units created pursuant to Section 65852.21, a primary dwelling, an accessory dwelling unit as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 66313, or a junior accessory dwelling unit as defined in subdivision (d) of Section 66313.

(k) Notwithstanding paragraph (3) of subdivision (c), an application shall not be rejected solely because it proposes adjacent or connected structures provided that the structures meet building code safety standards and are sufficient to allow separate conveyance.

(l) Local agencies shall include the number of applications for parcel maps for urban lot splits pursuant to this section in the annual housing element report as required by subparagraph (l) of paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 65400.

(m) For purposes of this section, both of the following shall apply:

(1) "Objective zoning standards," "objective subdivision standards," and "objective design review standards" mean standards that involve no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and are uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant or proponent and the public official prior to submittal. These standards may be embodied in alternative objective land use specifications adopted by a local agency, and may include, but are not limited to, housing overlay zones, specific plans, inclusionary zoning ordinances, and density bonus ordinances.

(2) "Local agency" means a city, county, or city and county, whether general law or chartered.

(n) A local agency may adopt an ordinance to implement the provisions of this section. An ordinance adopted to implement this section shall not be considered a project under Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000) of the Public Resources Code.

(o) Nothing in this section shall be construed to supersede or in any way alter or lessen the effect or application of the California Coastal Act of 1976 (Division 20 (commencing with Section 30000) of the Public Resources Code), except that the local agency shall not be required to hold public hearings for coastal development permit applications for urban lot splits pursuant to this section.

SEC. 3. Section 4 of Chapter 162 of the Statutes of 2021 is amended to read:

SEC. 4. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(1) The state faces a housing crisis of availability and affordability, in large part due to a severe shortage of housing.

(2) Solving the housing crisis therefore requires a multifaceted, statewide approach which will include, but is not limited to, any or some of the following:

(A) Encouraging an increase in the overall supply of housing.

(B) Encouraging the development of housing that is affordable to households at all income levels.

(C) Removing barriers to housing production.

(D) Expanding homeownership opportunities.

(E) Expanding the availability of rental housing.

(b) Therefore, addressing the housing crisis and the severe shortage of housing is a matter of statewide concern and not a municipal affair as that term is used in Section 5 of Article XI of the California Constitution. Therefore, Sections 1 and 2 of this act adding Sections 65852.21 and 66411.7 to the Government Code and Section 3 of this act amending Section 66452.6 of the Government Code apply to all cities, including charter cities.

SEC. 4. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(1) The state faces a housing crisis of availability and affordability, in large part due to a severe shortage of housing.

(2) Solving the housing crisis therefore requires a multifaceted, statewide approach which will include, but is not limited to, any or some of the following:

(A) Encouraging an increase in the overall supply of housing.

(B) Encouraging the development of housing that is affordable to households at all income levels.

(C) Removing barriers to housing production.

(D) Expanding homeownership opportunities.

(E) Expanding the availability of rental housing.

(b) Therefore, addressing the housing crisis and the severe shortage of housing is a matter of statewide concern and is not a municipal affair as that term is used in Section 5 of Article XI of the California Constitution. Therefore, Sections 1 and 2 of this act amending Sections 65852.21 and 66411.7 of the Government Code apply to all cities, including charter cities.

SEC. 5. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because a local agency or school district has the authority to levy service charges, fees, or assessments sufficient to pay for the program or level of service mandated by this act, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code.