



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

March 8, 2023

The Honorable Devon Mathis
Member, California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Room 5530
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 356 – SUPPORT
As Amended March 7, 2023**

Dear Assembly Member Mathis:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we support your Assembly Bill 356, regarding the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). RCRC is an association of forty rural California counties and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each of those member counties.

Assembly Bill 356 makes permanent a provision of CEQA stating that lead agencies are not required to evaluate the aesthetic effects of a project involving the refurbishment, conversion, repurposing, or replacement of an existing building that is abandoned, dilapidated, or has been vacant for more than one year and which includes the construction of housing.

California continues to struggle with severe housing supply and affordability problems. Efforts to increase housing and repurpose vacant buildings are sometimes thwarted by groups seeking to exploit CEQA for protectionist purposes to either derail the project or extract concessions from the project proponent. In some cases, opponents have attacked a project's aesthetic impacts even when the building at issue is abandoned, dilapidated, or has been vacant for long periods of time.

Public Resources Code Section 21081.3 was enacted to preclude these types of challenges by affirmatively declaring that a project's aesthetic impacts shall not be considered significant effects on the environment (and need not be evaluated) when the project involves refurbishment, conversion, repurposing, or replacement of an existing building that is abandoned, dilapidated, or has been vacant for over a year and which includes the construction of housing. Unfortunately, this provision is scheduled to sunset on January 1, 2024. AB 356 appropriately repeals that sunset date and is an important

1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, CA 95814 | www.rcrcnet.org | 916.447.4806 | Fax: 916.448.3154

ALPINE · AMADOR · BUTTE · CALAVERAS · COLUSA · DEL NORTE · EL DORADO · GLENN · HUMBOLDT · IMPERIAL · INYO · KINGS · LAKE · LASSEN
MADERA · MARIPOSA · MENDOCINO · MERCED · MODOC · MONO · MONTEREY · NAPA · NEVADA · PLACER · PLUMAS · SAN BENITO · SAN LUIS OBISPO
SANTA BARBARA · SHASTA · SIERRA · SISKIYOU · SOLANO · SONOMA · SUTTER · TEHAMA · TRINITY · TULARE · TUOLUMNE · YOLO · YUBA

The Honorable Devon Mathis
Assembly Bill 356
March 8, 2023
Page 2

tool for to avoid the additional costs and delays that could otherwise result from CEQA litigation on claims of significant aesthetic impacts.

For the above reasons, RCRC supports your AB 356. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at jkennedy@rcrcnet.org.

Sincerely,



JOHN KENNEDY
Policy Advocate

cc: The Honorable Luz Rivas, Chair, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Members of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Diane Dixon, Member, California State Assembly
The Honorable Heath Flora, Member, California State Assembly
The Honorable Kevin McCarty, Member, California State Assembly
The Honorable Phil Ting, Member, California State Assembly
The Honorable Greg Wallis, Member, California State Assembly
The Honorable Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh, Member, California State Senate
The Honorable Scott Wiener, Member, California State Senate
Lawrence Lingbloom, Chief Consultant, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Casey Dunn, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus