



March 14, 2023

The Honorable Luz Rivas, Chair  
California State Assembly Natural Resources Committee  
1020 N Street, Room 164  
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

Dear Assembly Member Rivas:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and League of California Cities (CalCities), we support Assembly Bill 356 (Mathis) regarding the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

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.

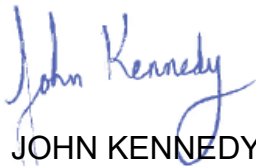
Public Resources Code Section 21081.3 was enacted to preclude these types of challenges by affirmatively declaring that a project's aesthetic impacts shall not be considered significant effects on the environment (and need not be evaluated) when the project involves refurbishment, conversion, repurposing, 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

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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, we are pleased to support AB 356 and urge your “Aye” vote in committee. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at [jkennedy@rcrcnet.org](mailto:jkennedy@rcrcnet.org), [mneuburger@counties.org](mailto:mneuburger@counties.org), or [nromo@calcities.org](mailto:nromo@calcities.org).

Sincerely,



JOHN KENNEDY  
Policy Advocate  
RCRC



MARK NEUBURGER  
Legislative Advocate  
CSAC



NICK ROMO  
Legislative Representative  
CalCities

cc: The Honorable Devon Mathis, Member, California State Assembly  
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  
Members of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee  
Lawrence Lingbloom, Chief Consultant, Assembly Natural Resources Committee  
Casey Dunn, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus