



May 22, 2023

The Honorable Ben Allen, Chair
California State Senate Environmental Quality Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 3230
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 356 (Mathis) – SUPPORT
As Amended April 18, 2023**

Dear Senator Allen:

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 extends the sunset date of 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.

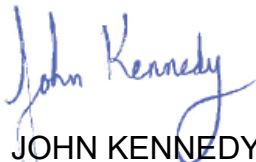
Public Resources Code Section 21081.3 was enacted to preclude these types of challenges by affirmatively declaring that a project's aesthetic impacts shall not be considered significant effects on the environment (and need not be evaluated) when the project involves refurbishment, conversion, repurposing, 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 extends 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 when this measure is heard before your committee. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at jkennedy@rcrcnet.org, mneuburger@counties.org, or 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 Senate Environmental Quality Committee
Scott Seekatz, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus