

**Housing News Clips and Editorials
January 2018 – March 2018**

Faster track for transit-friendly housing

San Francisco Chronicle, 03/06/2018

Promising new legislation by Assemblymen David Chiu, D-San Francisco, and Timothy Grayson, D-Concord, seeks to address the relative scarcity of BART-accessible housing by requiring the system to adopt zoning standards that promote residential development and forcing cities to go along with them...

Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, has introduced a broader and more contentious bill to speed transit-friendly development. SB827 would overrule local zoning restrictions to allow denser residential development up to half a mile from BART and other commuter rail stations and within a quarter-mile of frequent bus service, affecting large swaths of the Bay Area and beyond. Wiener recently announced amendments to the legislation designed to protect existing affordable housing from demolition.

Both measures take on the difficult but necessary task of countering shortsighted local opposition to the sort of smart housing development the region and state desperately need.

Villaraigosa and Newsom want to build more houses in California than ever before. Experts see the candidates' goal as an empty promise.

Los Angeles Times, 3/06/2018

Two of California's leading candidates for governor say they're going to end the housing shortage, a driver of the state's affordability crisis. Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom and former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa both have said they want developers in California to build a half million homes in a year — something that's never happened, at least in modern history. And they want builders to do it for seven straight years, resulting in 3.5 million new homes from the time the next governor takes office through 2025. Those numbers are so out of scale with California's history that they might be impossible to achieve....

As governor, Newsom or Villaraigosa would have to reshape how housing gets permitted to make the process faster and more likely to result in approval...

Doing so, experts said, could require taking on three of the most substantial barriers to large-scale housing production, all of which have had long enjoyed broad support [Proposition 13, California Environmental Quality Act and Local control over development decisions].

NIMBYism no response to Wiener's bold California housing plan

San Diego Union-Tribune, 2/26/2018

Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, is once again pushing bold housing legislation meant to end the shortage of shelter that has turned California into the poster child for American poverty. With some exceptions, Wiener's Senate Bill 827 would end restrictions on the number of houses that could be built within a half-mile of major transit routes and hubs and would prevent cities from forcing new homes to meet parking requirements. The new housing could be no taller than 45 to 85 feet, depending on its proximity to a station and whether it was on a main or side street. This is even more far-reaching than Wiener's Senate Bill 35, which was enacted last year. That law puts limits on what local governments that haven't met housing commitments can do to prevent housing projects on properly zoned parcels.

The San Diego Union-Tribune Editorial Board will let the legislative process play out more before taking a position on the bill. But so far the howls that have met it from politicians in Los Angeles and San Francisco have amounted to the same old parochial not-in-my-back-yard arguments that have driven California's housing shortage for decades.

Wiener is trying to use fresh thinking to deal with the housing crisis. His critics need to do so as well. If they don't like his approach, what would they suggest? No, doing nothing is not an acceptable answer.

Local zoning is getting in the way of housing Sacramento Bee, 02/21/2018

For a long time, being an environmentalist meant stopping things – dirty power plants, the clear cutting of trees and new dams. But in the battle against climate change, we must build – specifically, more affordable homes for our growing population. The perfect place to build these homes is near major transit stops, so residents don't have to drive for every errand and can avoid contributing to traffic and pollution. A recent UC Berkeley and Next 10 study showed that doing so would decrease greenhouse gas emissions by 1.79 million metric tons a year, equivalent to taking 378,000 cars off the road.

Fortunately consumers want walkable, transit-friendly neighborhoods. So why aren't we building more already? The unfortunate answer is that too many California cities and counties impose zoning restrictions that make it practically impossible to build low-cost, walkable housing. For decades, state leaders have allowed these local zoning policies to proliferate, to the point that the state now faces a severe housing shortage.

In response, state Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, has introduced landmark legislation to encourage more housing near transit. Senate Bill 827 would increase allowable density, eliminate minimum parking requirements and modestly raise height limits, depending on the location.

Can this candidate for governor fix Silicon Valley's housing "disaster"? Mercury News, 01/31/2018

Gubernatorial candidate Antonio Villaraigosa on Wednesday had a message sure to resonate with Bay Area residents struggling to live here — if he's elected, he'll pour resources into solving the region's affordable housing shortage.

Villaraigosa, the former mayor of Los Angeles, called the housing crisis a "tsunami disaster," and pledged to make it a top priority. "If you look at LA, San Jose, San Diego and San Francisco, we're the engine of the California economy," Villaraigosa said, addressing journalists and affordable housing advocates at the Vermont House, a 16-bed facility recently renovated to house homeless veterans...

One of his top priorities is to bring back local redevelopment agencies — financing tools city governments once used to funnel tax revenue to certain construction projects.

Yes, California needs taller, denser development near transit. But not at the expense of affordable housing.**Los Angeles Times, 01/23/2018**

Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) has proposed perhaps the biggest bill of them all — SB 827 — empowering the state to override local zoning laws to let developers build taller and more densely around rail stations and bus lines (if they offer frequent service during rush hours). The bill would let developers put up buildings between four and eight stories tall, even if local zoning codes don't allow it. (The greater height would be allowed to projects closer to transit lines and on major streets.)...

Wiener is right... Most cities in California have failed to permit enough housing and they've shied away from denser, compact development that would be more walkable, bikeable and transit-friendly.

But here's a potential problem with the bill: By setting blanket height and density increases statewide, the bill, as currently written, could eliminate key affordable housing incentives and protections designed to reduce displacement in gentrifying neighborhoods.

California's housing wars just starting**San Francisco Chronicle, 01/19/2018**

The Legislature's long-delayed response to California's housing crisis narrowly passed in September in a flurry of last-minute nail-biting and arm-twisting. Judging by the reception that has greeted one of the new year's first housing bills, that was nothing.

The legislation, by state Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, would overrule local zoning in favor of high-density residential development near mass transit. Sounds wonky enough, but fans of the idea have already declared that it would "change the shape of California housing" and, indeed, solve the housing crisis. Detractors, meanwhile, called it a "declaration of war on every urban community in California," comparing it to the law that enabled Andrew Jackson's Trail of Tears.

In reality, of course, SB827 is probably not a conspiracy or a cure-all. But, like Wiener's contribution to last year's housing package, designed to expedite residential development in urban areas that aren't meeting housing needs, it does go to the heart of the crisis by taking on the local barriers that have suppressed home building.

Last year was a big year for housing in California. Lawmakers aren't done yet.**Sacramento Bee, 1/03/2018**

California lawmakers are preparing new housing legislation this week, just months after Democrats in both houses pushed through the biggest legislative package on housing in decades.

Wiener...is planning to announce a trio of bills Thursday aimed at requiring cities to build taller, denser housing near transit, boosting the supply of farmworker housing and ensuring cities and counties are planning for their fair share of housing to meet demand associated with jobs and population... Assemblyman David Chiu, D-San Francisco, who has sought to encourage low-income housing construction through tax credits for developers, is also planning legislation...

Other housing issues that could come up this year are [Rent control, Proposition 13, Redevelopment and California Environmental Quality Act].