

Al Adam
Mayor

August 3, 2020

Honorable Cecelia Aguilar-Curry
Chair, Assembly Local Government Committee
Legislative Office Building, 1020 N Street, Room 157
Sacramento, CA 94249

RE: SB 1385 (CABALLERO) LOCAL PLANNING- HOUSING IN COMMERCIAL ZONES – OPPOSE

Dear Chair Aguilar-Curry:

On behalf of the City of Thousand Oaks, I respectfully oppose SB 1385. This bill, known as the Neighborhood Homes Act, would allow lots zoned for office or retail commercial use, called “neighborhood lots” to be up-zoned for residential use. This bill would also:

- Require housing development to meet or exceed the density deemed appropriate to accommodate affordable housing
- Expand the state’s ministerial housing approval process to include commercial properties that have been vacant or less than 50 percent occupied for at least three years
- Subject the development to local zoning, parking and design ordinances
- Authorize local governments to establish a Community Finance District to provide for and maintain public infrastructure

The popularity and ease of online retail has resulted in a number of store closures resulting in abandoned retail sites and offices. While I agree that this is a great opportunity to support more housing, SB 1385 should be an optional tool, not a state mandated requirement.

SB 1385 would require the density for neighborhood lots to meet or exceed the density deemed appropriate to accommodate housing for lower income households including a density of at least 20 units per acre for a suburban jurisdiction. This bill would force cities to approve high density housing projects in areas that cannot accommodate higher densities. While the bill states that a new development must adhere to objective zoning, subdivision and design review standards, regrettably, there are no such standards that exist for housing in commercial zones.

If commercial properties have been vacant or less than 50 percent occupied for at least three years, this bill would allow streamline or ministerial approval. When it comes to high density projects, the City should be given discretionary review to hold a public

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hearing and conduct an evaluation to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA.)

This bill does not address the potential economic impacts of up-zoning neighborhood lots. Commercial zones generate sales and business tax revenue which the Cities heavily rely upon. Conversion to residential may have a detrimental effect on local general fund revenue and impact local services. Furthermore, while the project may yield more housing, it will displace the remaining 50% of businesses who will need to temporarily or permanently relocate, and even close, resulting in job losses.

While I appreciate that rezoned neighborhood lots could apply toward Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) obligations, SB 1385 should allow cities the ability to determine if it is the right solution for their community.

For these reasons, I oppose SB 1385.

Sincerely,



Albert C. Adam
Mayor

c: Senator Anna Caballero
Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin
Senator Henry Stern
David Mullinax – Regional Public Affairs Manager, dmullinax@cacities.org
League of California Cities, cityletters@cacities.org
Joe A. Gonsalves and Son

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